Turris Eburnea.

Geo. Fred.k Houghton.

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Miss Hennessey

to Mrs Houghton.

ROSA IMMACULATA,

OR,

THE TOWER OF IVORY,

IN THE

House of Anna and Joachim.

"IN THAT DAY SHALL THE BUD OF THE LORD BE IN MAGNIFICENCE."—ISAIAH.

"O MY DOVE! IN THE CLEFTS OF THE ROCK, IN THE PLACES OF THE WALL, SHOW ME THY FACE."—SOLOMON.

"DRAW ME AND WE WILL RUN AFTER THEE IN THE ODOR OF THY OINTMENTS."—SOLOMON.

"*Recordare, Virgo Mater, in conspectu Dei, ut loquaris pro nobis bona.*"—*Missale Romanum.*

"*Tota Pulchra es, O Maria! Et macula non est in te.*"

BY

MARIE JOSEPHINE.

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To

The Dear Parents

OF

Rosa Immaculata.

APPROBATIONS.

BURLINGTON, VT., *January* 4, 1867.

MISS MARIE JOSEPHINE H.:

I have read with much interest your new work in honor of Mary, the Rosa Immaculata. I willingly approve of its publication, and hope it may have a very large circulation.

✠ LOUIS,

Bishop of Burlington, Vt.

CINCINNATI, *January* 11, 1867.

We feel honored in adding our name to that of the Rt. Rev. Bishop of Burlington, in recommending to all classes of readers, ROSA IMMACULATA, a second volume to Rosa Mystica, by the same gifted convert authoress.

✠ J B. PURCELL,

Archbishop of Cincinnati.

The Dear Parents of Mary.

Beyond the Cison's silver wave,
And on the sacred Hill,
Where God the sweetest pastures gave,
And all was flowery, cool, and still,

Once lived the noblest and the tenderest sire
That ever blessed the hearth;
Whose charities, whose prayers, whose long desire
Was crowned by Mary's birth.

And the kind matron of his righteous house
The virtues all combined
Of her great ancestors, dear spouse!
In her sweet heart enshrined.

And if we measure by the fruit the tree,
And by its rays the sun,
What must the greatness of these great saints be,
Whose peaceful life so run!

To them God gave the centre of His heart on earth,
The magnet of His love,
The Virgin who His sole Begotten Son gave birth,
His one white human dove!

INVOCATION.*

"O VIRGIN OF GOD, beautiful above all women! Thou in whom are all the hopes of life and of virtue. Mother of beautiful love and holy hope, hasten and appear. Come, O beloved of the Lord. Already the winter has passed, and the flowers appear in the land. Show us thy face, and let our ears hear thy voice. How sweet thy voice! how brilliant thy face! Thine eyes are limpid as the dove's, and thy cheeks encrimsoned with beauty! Thy graces and thy virtues are, in the midst of our desert, like the sweet aroma of incense and myrrh, and of all sweet perfumes. Yes, thou art all beautiful. O, the beloved of God! Thou art all beautiful, and there is no spot in thee. Come, then, our only one, the most perfect of creatures. Come, O glorious Mary! . . . . . We believe that thou hast received all grace, O Virgin Mother of Christ! Surround us with thy celestial influences, which, as a paradise of delights, are loaded with the most beautiful flowers and excellent fruits of grace and virtue. We beseech thee to be our patroness. . . . . Keep us ever in thy memory, that we may glorify ourselves in thee, and in the divine canticles celebrate the victory of thy virtues and thine imperishable mysteries."

* St. Methodius, bishop of Tyre.

INTRODUCTORY.

ROSA IMMACULATA, or vol. ii. of the *Mystical Rose:* a book that may appear, at first, should have preceded its predecessor, but may be found a legitimate and catholic successor. We have been desired to write an introduction; but who may read needs not, and who may not read, hath not need, and we will be brief. It will be readily apparent unto the reader, vol. i., or *Rosa Mystica*, is but an appropriate presentation of the outlines of a series—a sort of laying down at first of a poetical map of the life of the Blessed Virgin; and that a world-map—of the Blessed Virgin's world—or on a world-map scale. *Rosa Immaculata* is the first section-map, commencing back at the white beginning, and moving onward, leaving nothing untraced, discovered in this immaculate country, covering the space of the first fifteen years and a little more. The author inclines, we at once recognize, to the older and more ardent traditions. Doubtless to a poet, and one converted to our holy faith by Mary, the most mystical and seraphic-hearted old saints have never written any thing too good, too high, or too wonderful, concerning, or of, their incomparable Queen; and there is nothing too marvellous in hearing the rustle of an angel's wing bringing in supper to the Virgin of the Incarnation, or the soft fall of her immaculate footsteps on the sanctuary floor of the Holies. The

distrust has never entered into her heart that there can be any thing imagined too beautiful or angel-surrounded for the Mother of God. The style is less labored than Volume I.; yet we do not know as unappropriately; it is the country of youth, and such a free, pure, simple, fervent childhood and youth! Says the author: "Rosa Mystica was written as a labor of mystical love, and we took all the time for it that we wished, and saw not beyond. By the grace of God and the sweet love of Mary, we are a Catholic—the highest and dearest privilege in heaven or earth, and we cannot forbear taking up the dear olden labor that led into the one Sovereign Fold anew, and, as a child now of the faith, 'ancient and ever new' in its consequent developments and more tender detail. We have anxieties, however, for this so fresh production, written out, from the first twenty or thirty pages, entire within the year, and for the most part during the first months of a sore bereavement, working for the Heavenly Mother to ease our sorrow for the earthly one;—and it is born more of the heart than of the head, and we have not perhaps pruned it as we would in a stronger day. We may mistake in giving so early publication, and if so, now must lean upon the indulgence of those whose delight it is to serve Mary much and fast. We only regret it is not better—not having tried, and feel somewhat, to quote the words of another. "If we have failed, it is glorious enough to have made the attempt;", and moreover, "there are inexpressible joys in labor done before God and for God, vast horizons whose perspectives give an insight into eternal splendors." We are paid, and only repent our flower is not fairer and more matured—any thing should be so good one gives the Blessed Virgin—the best they can possibly produce—and yet we are so impatient to see it on our Mother's shrine for Christmas, we have forwarded it for Mary,

beseeching her immaculate charity may so cover deficiency and defect as to accept our little offering of devotion." Thus far from the author. We are also informed fuller traditional notes were in part prepared, but as the work was already in press before completed, and there being a press for time, they have been, and perhaps as well, much retrenched, as the traditions inwoven or built upon are presumed to be well known among Catholic readers. We have no more to add, save we are expected to date the book for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of our Blessed Virgin Mother.

BURLINGTON, VT., *December* 8, 1866.

Immaculate! Immaculate!

"O MOTHER! I could weep for mirth,
Joy fills my heart so fast!
My soul to-day is heaven on earth,
O, could the transport last!

"I think of thee and what thou art,
Thy majesty, thy state;
And I keep singing in my heart,
Immaculate! Immaculate!

"The angels answer with their songs,
Bright choirs in gleaming rows;
And saints flock round thy feet in throngs,
And heaven with bliss o'erflows.

"O! I would rather, mother dear,
Thou shouldst be what thou art,
Than sit where thou dost, O! so near
Unto the Sacred Heart.

"O! I would forfeit all for thee,
Rather than thou shouldst miss
One jewel from thy majesty,
One glory from thy bliss.

"Conceived, conceived Immaculate!
O, what a joy for thee!
Conceived, conceived Immaculate!
O, greater joy for me!

"I think of thee and what thou art,
Thy majesty, thy state,
And I keep singing in my heart,
Immaculate! Immaculate!"—FABER.

Turris Eburnea.

A Tower of Ivory in a field!
And it is a moon-night.
The Tower is fairer than the moon,
Has drawn down all her light.

And more; the Tower is as gold
Or silver in the sun;
Celestial lights its angles strike,
And through its ivories run.

A field within, uncrossed, save by
The sandal of a God—
Nor hand within hath thrust to pluck
A lily from the sod.

"Turris Eburnea," angels not without spot,
Abashed around thee wait,
Above us loom, O white Tower of our Faith,
Mary Immaculate!

Speculum Justitiæ.

A Mirror on the earth,
For brightness as the morn,
Or the pure, open heavens beneath,
Whose beams drop to adorn,

Or 'neath the softly lambent sky,
A-tween the earth and air,
And as the angels wandered by
They always tarried there.

The Purity Above gazed down,
'T was whiter then than snow,
The charity of God looked in
And set it all a-glow.

Admiring seraphs o'er it bent;
It caught the beauty of each face—
"Mirror of Justice," yet did wait,
Its clearness sought more grace.

It longed to see the unbegotten Brow,
To mirror in its breast the Word,
The Sun of Justice could but look within;
It held its pictured Lord.

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Rosa Immaculata.

CHAPTER I.

CHARITY.

"BRING INTO MY STOREHOUSE ALL MY TITHES AND PROVE ME, WHEREWITHAL I WILL POUR THEE OUT A BLESSING TILL THERE SHALL NOT BE ROOM TO CONTAIN."

SCENE—*Nazareth, or the "hill of frankincense," whereon stood the holy house of Joachim and Anna, the dear parents of Mary.*

"Figure to yourself the fine and extensive pasturages that surround the abode of St. Joachim and St. Anna . . . Represent to yourself an ancient Jewish abode, in which every thing recalls the pastoral and patriarchal manners of the ancestors of the Messiah."*

Approach after the harvesting-time; Behold Joachim and Anna dividing their income.†

JOACHIM.

THE first part for the altar: we will make
This a full third. His part may not under-run
Who giveth all. Heap the sacrifice-third.

---

* *Mater Admirabilis.*

† "Fulbert of Chartres, Serm. II., on the birth of the Virgin, teaches expressly that St. Joachim and St. Anna had an income

ANNA.

This for the wayfarer and for the poor—

JOACHIM.

Should not lack—want on the Hill of Nazareth
Were a shame, dear spouse. The rest you will store.

ANNA.

Our own little third!

JOACHIM.

Enough, prudent housewife,
Enough! we are but two.

ANNA.

(*With a sigh.*)

But two! Enough!
And wherewithal we can now and then part
To our heirs?

JOACHIM.

And to the childless the poor—

ANNA.

Are twice their heirs. No one around must want
This year.

---

or property, which they divided into three parts. If we may credit the Protevangelion of St James, this income was large." —BINET.

JOACHIM.

For twenty years, good spouse, we have
Divided thus.

ANNA.

All but, good Joachim,
Your heap grows higher for the sacrifice,
Each time.

JOACHIM.

Were I less generous in my youth?
Ah, well! as our locks ripen we should see
More and yet more to whom belongeth all;—
How good it is to give most unto God.

ANNA.

Good! Oh, it is only good to have, to give:
And twice-told meet for us. The little cot
Where we have dwelt so tranquilly these score
Of years will soon stand empty on the hill;
We have no nobler fruit to offer up,
Than the poor growth of our flocks and fields,
And so we press that measure down, and run
It o'er for God;—for God.

JOACHIM.

Amen! Amen!

CHAPTER II.

FIRST IMMACULATE CONCEPTION DAY.

"Regina sine labe originali concepta, ora pro nobis."

PART I.

JOACHIM.*

"THERE SHALL COME FORTH A ROD OUT OF THE ROOT OF JESSE, AND A FLOWER SHALL RISE UP OUT OF HIS ROOT."—ISAIAH xi. 1.

SCENE—*Saint Joachim at prayer upon the mountain.*

LONG had he knelt in prayer, that man of God;
His soul was sorrowful and full. He thought,
Had thought before this hour, the hope was dead,
And grace with the dead hope had reckoned won
And poured upon its grave; he sure content
With what Jehovah, great, withheld, as gave;
But when a neighbor mocked him in the gates
This morn, and called him but a barren stalk,
A withered root, a fruitless branch in Israel,
The old man felt a sudden—No, not sting—

---

* Joachim signifies preparation of the Lord.

The scorner could not reach his good heart so;
But what upon the altar of his hope
A thousand times had bled, his whole soul moved,
And straightway fled unto his prayer-place up—
Far up the mountain side—a little cleft
Within the hills, from all the hamlet stirs
Off-shut and still. 'A very hermit's shrine?'
Not so; it shut out all the world beside,
But overlooked the cottage, where his Anna
In the early morning spun. Dear prayer-place!
Within the cleft an ancient laurel stood;
Beneath the tree a pillar rose, of stone,
Where he was wont, still in the summer morns,
To climb and pray. But winter winds are out
To-day; it is of storms the month; cold rains
Sift slowly over the deserted hills,
His kine are in the manger stalled, the sheep
Are in their fold; but he, poor, scoffed old man,
Struggling as one conscious of his struggles not,
So greater far the struggle in the soul,
Than 'gainst the winds his slippery pathway up,
Too late! too late! had not yet learned, and knelt
Beside the dear old stone, told simply out—
As any poor child beaten in the street,
Might to his father come—at first his wrongs
And sorrows unto God—as almost crushed;

Then, as he longer prayed, he could not stay
His prayers—Isaiah's visions, Daniel's dreams,
Messiah's face, in on his strugglings shone—
'Years and signs ripen fast, and David's sons
So few! But, Lord, my vine! Oh! I could wait
A thousand years, Messiah, from my loins
To look from Abraham's Bosom down and see!
When I might hope, no human hope! Lord! Lord!
What hath thy servant done? I cannot live
Reproached! my gray hairs mocked! last of my race!
By-word unto my tribe; a house that first
For the Messiah looked; Oh, take me "where
The wicked cease, the disappointed rest!"'
He laid his head upon the wet stone down,
And as he ceased an angel by him stood.
'Thy prayer is heard, and Anna, thy chaste spouse,
In full time from this favored day shall bear
The Heir of Joy, the Child of Grace,—a sign
To thee, go to the vineyard down, thy wife
Shall meet thee with this message in the gates.
Look down upon thy house!'
And he looked down,
The storm had paused; a rainbow arches over—
Not far up in the sky, but touching earth
On either side—his cot. And as he looked,
The angel, he was gone. And Joachim,

Wondering much, hasted as a young man down
Unto his house; and ever he drew near,
Lo, the sweetly serene matron of his home,
Up from her garden coming, to the gates!
And never, in the first fair bloom of youth,
Had she appeared so lovely in his eyes.
He would have clasped her in his reverent arms,
Or bowèd at her feet, so much of promise
In her softly heaven-lighted face she brought,
So much of glory had the angel left
With her, but waited as he had been told,
The sign; nor waited, can it hardly yet
Be wrote; for straight her happy hands toward him
She held—and told him—

What may in our next,
A chapter after this be shown; thus on,
As these good saints may help. So for us pray!

PART II.

Anna.*

"SAINT ANNA, SPOUSE OF JOACHIM, PRAY FOR US."

'SLOW fell the waning rains, I sure could go—
It did not rain too fast when a new prayer

* Anna signifies grace, or gracious.

Was waiting 'neath the laurel to ascend,
Where I am wont to pray.'
'Her laurel tree
Had she?' She had—her trysting-place with heaven,
Chosen for spot, perhaps, whereon it grew—
A nook the shadiest of her garden-lanes,
Or for that silent sympathy in all
We sometimes trace, where marriage meets design.
Dear, good old, glorious pair, standing within
The hallowed morning of a second spring,
The very cast of each bland face grown like
The smile of mellow richness, one, so same;
The gentle cadenced voice, one happy chord;
Two souls but duplicates, showing how fair,
Perfect and fair, that sacrament complete.
But lo, irradiated Anna's words
We lose. She even now hath told, like prayer
Like angel, and like revelation poured
Into her husband's happy, hearkening ears,
And now is telling when from off her knees
She rose, she saw she in a rainbow stood;
And happy, hearkening Joachim, he stands
As one who hears divining half—and yet,
Divining not; perhaps of Abraham
And Isaac thinks. His Sarah stands beside,
Esteemed as Sarah precious in his eyes;

And yet he would have blushed to have once thought
Himself worthy in the future world to stand
Beside that father of the patriarchs;
So poor in their own eyes do great saints look.
Oh man! about to be unconscious raised
By grace, than glorious old Abraham
A thousand heights, magnificent above;
But as it was, he only deeper smiled
And said, God's blessed word is always true,—
And Anna answered, the day is like spring!
A summer dropped in Chisleau, month of storms;
Said Joachim, great is the Lord; and good,
Anna replied—and Joachim hastes to say,
Ever the morning after such promise wane,
Make for the priests a banquet, good spouse;
Let us a present to the temple send.

[Anna made up the banquet and it was generous.]

(Joachim *to his servant* Eleazer.)

Gather to ye ten of the finest lambs*

"In the tribes of Israel there was a rich man named Joachim, who on festival days offered to God sacrifices twice as great as the rest. An angel appearing to him told him he should have issue, and he instantly promised to offer the child to God. When this occurred Joachim was in the wilderness, and descending to his

And take with the banquet Anna provides.

[And the servant of Joachim did as bade.]

PART III.

AFTERNOON.

The angel had not left;
It did his angel-heart a good to see
The joy out-cropping from their happy looks
And ways. The cheerful Anna tried to spin,
Losing her threads in mystic wonderings,
Drifted into a happy year from now;
And other angels came by her to stand—
By Joachim who toiled, scarce can be told,
So cheerily he beat the barley for the mill;
Had then the curtain, shutting off that world
That touches us unseen on every side,

---

house, he sent to the temple ten sheep for a sacrifice, and a banquet for the priests, ancients and people. *Eustachius Hexameron.* published by Leo Atlatius, by an author called James—Father Joseph Ignatius Vallejo's note to Binet's Life of St. Joachim and St. Anne. Henschenus and Papebroke (March 20, 11 Num. 207), with no better grounds than a simple conjecture, as they admit, suppose St. Joachim to have had no goods but a few sheep of which he was himself the shepherd."—VALLEJO.

Been drawn, a house of angels might been seen
Bearing a waiting grace in each bright palm.

PART IV.

EVENING.

"SAINT ANNA, QUEEN OF ANGELS, PRAY FOR US."

The sweet changed winter day
Had died—died like a summer afternoon,
And yet the lingering angels do not go.
Oh, they shall never go. It is a house
Of angels evermore, who stoop to see
In these poor walls such choice predestinate
They cannot go! I wonder if they know
His cradle too shall rock upon these floors;
That most of all His humble days with man,
He too, shall sojourn here? I wonder,
What halos from these lowly rafters seem
To hang ready for superhuman brows
Not born, these angels see, so cannot go?
O house of angels evermore! for lo,
When He hath gone cross-laden up the Mount,
Who hastens now to come, and she, th' being pure
This night conceived, hath by Him stood and shared
His cup—and retributive wrath shall sweep

This land of vineyards and of groves, alarmed
For this dear house when infidelic hordes
Would wreak their desecrating ruth, arise
Ye may in holy fear, yet in majesty
Of th' angelic might, to bear it in your zeal
Where bland Italia's radiantly reverent skies
In constant beauty glow, and nestled last,
Where fair Loretto's purpled roses woo,
It shall remain a shrine of power and prayer,
Where fainting pilgrims rapt shall kneel to find
The blessing of the Virgin and her Son.

PART V.

HOLY IMMACULATE CONCEPTION MIDNIGHT.

The storm, as wont with winter, came not back.

Soft stars peered through the upper blue,
Within the rocks a dove was heard to coo,
A nightingale in vesper trill,
Amid the groves of Nazareth hill,
And sweeter than the dove, or bird,
The angel murmur softly heard,
"Blessings of the breast, blessings of the womb,"
The Rose of Jesse soon shall bloom;
No wintry wind shall brush this cot,
Forever blessed be this spot!

A child conceived that knows no stain,
This darkened world shall light again:
And floating from that chosen hill,
A blessing seems the earth to fill;
Across the calm-waved, hallowed sea,—
The tranquil bed of Galilee,—
Through neighboring plains of Jericho
The mystic peace seems first to flow;
Along the swollen Jordan's shore
The lions ceased their wonted roar,
The jackall slacked its nightly cry,
The bandit could not brook so sweet a sky,
As floating from that chosen hill
A blessing seemed the earth to fill,
A child conceived that knows no stain,
This darkened world shall light again.
"Blessings of the breast, blessings of the womb,"
The Rose of Jesse soon shall bloom.

"Saint Anna, rod of Jesse, pray for us."
"Saint Anna, fruitful tree, pray for us."
"Saint Anna, fruit-bearing vine, pray for us."

—Litany of St. Anna

IMMACULATE?

"TURRIS EBURNEA ORA, PRO NOBIS!"

Would He who fair Eve formed as pure as snow
His chosen Mother make less purely glow?

How could the Mother of the Infinite
Walk in a robe than Adam's bride less white?

It might not, could not be, and so all Heaven poured
Its graces on the destined mother of its Lord;

And God, to fit her to her royal state,
His Mother moulds immaculate.

"*Tower of Ivory, pray for us!*"

CHAPTER III.

EXPECTATION OF ANNA.

"CAUSÆ LÆTÆ, ORA PRO NOBIS."

OEVER since that other morning blest,
The flower-footed months, following each,
Have come as nine princesses bearing gifts.
At first the meadow-grasses made a show

Of spires two for one, the old rhohendron
In Joachim's field, a century-tree decayed,
That had not bloomed some summers past, had flowers.
Even the children of the hamlet were
Not late, to in the hedges find the nests,
Than other summers twice as filled. Blest spot!
And every bird, with twice as bright a wing
As other summer-bird, sang twice as sweet:
His sheaves, the clusterage of the vine, the figs
Upon the branch, as drew the harvest on,
The doting peasant counted o'er, and said
Within his thought, no wonder such a year,
The barren sings that God hath visited;—
Poor human understanding! how alway like
We find, to credit nature and not God!
Only the pious Anna and her spouse,
Wandered into the twice-blessed fields, perceived
The very trees rejoiced with them; and thus
The mother bearing babe immaculate,
Never so happy in her life, waited her time.

CHAPTER IV.

VIGIL OF IMMACULATE NATIVITY.

"Stella Matutina, ora pro nobis."

Behold Anna sitting in the doorway of the little house at Nazareth, and Joachim walking in the fields a little distant, praying out under the stars like Isaac—"And he was gone forth to meditate in the fields, the day being now well spent."

ANNA is meditating on the threshold;
And it is something that brings the picture
Of her sweet youth back—one dear word,
One hallowed word that she seems turning over
And over, caressingly within her heart,
Calls such a tender light into her eyes,
We leave good Joachim to his precious prayers,—
And he is praying for the mother and the child,
We think—to come and sit at Anna's feet.

ANNA.

The name my father called my gentle mother by!*

---

* "Nathan by his wife Mary had three daughters, the first of whom was called Mary, like her mother, the second Sobe, and the third Anne, the glorious mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary."—*De fide orthodoxa*, lib. iv. chap. xv. BINET.

OURSELF.

I wonder if she has named the precious babe?
I think that mothers mostly name their babes
Before they're born. How can they wait?

ANNA.

He called my gentle mother by! I had
But five sweet years with her: yet, as a star
Hangs over some still lake, the memory
Of my fair mother's face smiles o'er my heart.
She was so pious! Peace to her valiant soul!
How calm she went forth from the holy gates
When she had kissed and left her favorite child.*
I saw my precious mother never more,
And so that picture I have kept.—I came,—
Dear Bethlehem, where I was born,—to find
A grave; but Joachim with me returned.
O, God had given me so good a spouse!
And I grew comforted in Nazareth.
O Mary, and O Bethlehem, two names
That link within my heart so sweet, I love
To keep them bright.

---

* "St. Anne had been brought up in the temple."—TRADITION.

OURSELF.

And there she paused, saying,
Taking it but a moment after up,
Dreamily, sweetly, "*Mary?*" Anna had
A beautiful way of saying Mary!
Nor more she said, only—

ANNA.

Nine months to-night,
I never thought: nine months to-morrow knew,—
Yes, yes, how good God is to those who wait.

[And Anna sat in silence and Joachim walked in silence.]

The expectant eve shone twice as bright,
The harvest moon shed twice her light;
What marvel brighter beamed the moon,
When even summer came more soon?
'Twere marvel more if moon could hold
In her full horn th' floodings of her gold,
Nor pour it as one regal shower
Of brightness o'er such blissful hour.

The eye of night shone twice as bright,
The harvest moon shed twice her light,

And sweet instead of spot, a star *
Glowed on her silver disc afar;—
What marvel, bright, a virgin gem
New-pearled the moon's sweet diadem?
It were a marvel greater far
Could moon wear spot instead of star,
When a new Eve is born below
Should not her sky some token show?
And star and moon and night twice glows
To usher in the Virgin Rose.

CHAPTER V.

IMMACULATE NATIVITY.

"WHO IS SHE THAT COMETH FORTH AS THE MORNING RISING?"—CANTICLES vi. 9.

"Saint Anna, Mother of the Virgin Mary, pray for us."

AS the Christ-years are the first gems in the cycles grand of time,
There are fifteen ere the days are diamonds that as pearl-years shine:

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* "The night preceding, the moon appeared without her usual spot, a bright star sparkling on her disk, and in the morning the sun shone with twofold splendor."—*Note to* GENTILUCCI.

Two conceptions, one immaculate, one divine, one from an earth-sod
Uprising white to wait that other coming down with God.
These years are as a chain of pearls between:—Thus a silver dawn,
Scarcely less than sunrise, touched the Nazareth hill, touched the happy lawn
Where the cot of Joachim, blessed patriarch! in its blandness stood
Serene, touched the olden vintage and the little olive wood,
Touched the cottage, cottage dear before! dearer still this dearest morn:
Hasten up, O sun, to see in Anna's cot what babe is born;—
Rapt in smile, tender, supernatural, on the breast of Anna,
Blissful, tender Anna, and the wing of Gabriel as a banner
Drapes and arches bed and breast and babe;—over in the air, as crown
To our picture, hovering are the cherubs, whether they came down
With the angels first to Anna, or alighted fresh from Heaven
This morn, I have not been told; but the cherubs they are seven.
O, our group of beauty! Joachim kneeling, offering up to God
By the couch-side of his Anna, the lily offspring of their blood.

O happiest parent-pair! O holy couch where such an heir
was born!
O long, sad, tear-drenched earth, look up! thou hast another
Eden morn!
O gracious Anna, more than all of Judah's mothers blest,
The one white flower of human birth is cradled on thy
breast:
Little White Rose of Heaven! its face is like an angel's face!
The heavenly hair! our lady-babe's sweet eyes, O cherub
child of grace!
Her breath is as the incense! her lips a flower-flake!
My harp is beauty-burdened now, I cannot sing without a
break!—

O sweet Babe-Mother of my Lord,
I fear to touch the sounding chord;—
Ah, I have ever sighed in vain
To wake for thee one equal strain,
And lingering worship still the precious feet
Where I but take more than I give that's sweet

Ah, one might paint the purple of the sunset hues,
Or gather up the pureness of the morning dews,
Or picture the vermilion of the flower
That sprang but from an earthly bower,
Yet it were more, and higher than an angel-art
To limn the fairness of that face or heart;

I trace, and wonder not th' admiring while,
The gentle glories of that smile,—
From unbeginning ages flows
The light that suns the Nazareth Rose.
There's another Babe in the Bosom of the Father lies,
The Unbegotten Heir, the magnet of the skies,
A Picture of God, as "unreckoned ages roll,"
A likeness of the Father-face and soul,—
The brightness of the Father exprest,—
Pictured in His own pellucid breast.
Faber,* poet-priest, tells you, sweetest, how—
The Image, or the Shadow of that brow
Unbeginning ages crown
To His own breast looking down.—

And the Babe looks up, as the Father breathes above,
And the fruitage, is the "Many-gifted Dove;"
And the fruitage of the Three—
Of the triple Unity.—
Creation, and a race,
Lost and ruined, raised by grace,
And lifted up through fire and blood,
Till humanity inbosoms God.
Ever-satisfied Trinity,
See the link from their eternity:—

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* FABER'S *Blessed Sacrament.*

From unbeginning ages, flows
The light that suns the Nazareth Rose.

Hasten up, O sun, bring the softest of thy gold, lower thy crown and haste this morn;
The Flower of the Patriarchs, the Virgin Mother of a God, is born.
Now the generous sun is coming, very flooding, and yet veiling all the burning in his light.
Doth he see purity more shining than his beaming,—purity more bright?
And the lark mistakes this casement for the Heavenly gate:
He saw and could not pass the ROSE IMMACULATE.

And the brown bee at the lattice, on the blossoms of the balm, drops his flower, drops his hum;
Taking in honey faster from the breath of Anna's Rose, or the fragrancies that come
From her act of love,—offering of completeness, first sweets of her life-bloom,
Perfect perfume, as it goes out up to God, embalming evermore that room.
And the patriarchs in limbus catch a fragrant thrill
As it floats in swiftness far above the Nazareth hill.

And that other Babe, in the bosom of the Father, leaps for love,
And the Father rains His smile down on His daughter, dearest daughter! and the Dove,
That "Many-gifted Dove," is yearning for His Spouse. O babe, the very Heavens' desire,
And angels, dropped in serried ranks round all the Nazareth hills, bend to admire.
Can there be eyes so blind as yet refuse
The beauty of this soul to see—a mother God could choose,

His House of Gold, who tabernacles in the sun, His Ivory Tower,
And bow not with a happier, holier homage down, and bless God for this hour?
O Babe that sees and in the Bosom of the Father leaps, let not that heart be mine;
O Virgin Mother of my God to be, I kiss thy lily feet and catch a thrill,—'twas something like divine!
Amen! My adoration it is God's, my homage it is thine,
And thine my love, next unto Him,
Babe-Queen of Seraphim.

CHAPTER VI.

NINE DAYS OLD.*

"NOMEN VIRGINIS MARIA, MEL IN ORE, MELOS IN AURE, JUBILUM IN CORDE"—THE NAME OF MARY IS HONEY IN THE MOUTH, MELODY IN THE EARS, JOY IN THE HEART.—ST. BENARD.

"Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis."

SAINT ANNA, Saint Joachim, their hearts illumed,
Sweet understood that God had willed to visit
Israel, and the fair child unto them born
A chosen one, and heir of benediction, saw.
Dear saints, their incomparable infant
They think to name. Let us imagine
And represent unto ourselves their cot—
In this peaceful room, the holy cradle
Wherein reposes Anna's babe, new-born
And waiting for a name. Joachim bends
Over the precious cradle, giving out odors
More than spikenard,† caressingly, dear sire!

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* It was the custom of the Israelites to make a feast upon the ninth day after the birth, and give the child its name.

† "The cradles of the rich were perfumed with spikenard, myrrh, and aloes."—ORSINI.

And Anna, rejoicing mother, lifts her bud
Of life unto her own maternal breast
And drinks in the sweetness of the little face.

A beautiful bird hath flown to thy breast,
A snowy dove from Paradise; what name? what name?
There's a light as stars round its spotless crest,
A glow that was dropped from the skies whence it came,

As it shot from the thought of God,
Another new-made soul,
The crown of angels touched the sod
As it flashed to its beautiful goal—

Down, down to the one dear immaculate heart
That waits in the will of God—
Whiter than snow, or the flowers that start
From the lily's virginal rod—

To grow as a cell of wax snow-white,
With a sweetness from God perfumed,
As a crystal over light,
By love more than by light illumed.

What name for the snow-white dove,
For the fairest human bird,

Come to nest in thy breast of love!
We wait the beautiful word.

"Daughter! Mother! Bride!" sure she was named—
She with soul fairer than the cherubim—
Ere the world was lost, ere the world was framed;—
She with heart warmer than the seraphim.

She was named, and the pearl must drop to them,
To their hearts, to their lips; for its falling, listen!
It will drop for the ages, earth and Heaven, a gem:
It will drop, ever next the name of God to glisten.

We think that it has dropped ere this, to rest
In Anna's filial, as maternal breast.
But hush, my reverent harp-strings,
————————Mother Anna sings.

ANNA.

I fold, I feed her at my breast,
I act a mother's part;
Yet ever, as my darling's prest,
The tides of homage start.

Her name should be, by royal right,
Our LADY* and our Queen;

* The name of Mary is said to signify, Our Lady, Mistress, Sove-

As rich, as chaste, as sunrise light;
Our MISTRESS and our SOVEREIGN mean.

JOACHIM.

(*As gazing down a vista of the ages.*)

Has that dove of the ark, bearing the olive-branch, peace,
Come back to our deluge-swept world again?
Will the wild storm-wail of the tempest cease,
As our sweet little harbinger flies o'er the main?
Oh, the sea it is dark and the signs are bad!
And a thousand shivered masts are out!
And ever anon some craft—how sad!
Is drawn to the maelstrom's fatal spout.

There's a boat that touches the outer circle now—
Now it cuts the inner curve with its prow
And spins round the fatal whirl—
The sails of its mast in fright unfurl—
A downward tunnel of hissing foam! thrice more,
And then! the boatman stands in his peril sore:
As ever an arrow, round and round it will come;
Twice more—my God! are his white lips dumb?

---

reign, a sea filled with bitterness, or a dark and stormy sea lit by a star, or Star of the Sea, and the Illuminator or Illuminatress.

Once more! A shriek! But 't was a prayer, and I see
Through a break in the cloud, our STAR OF THE SEA!
And that bark that hung over the mouth of hell,
Is drawn by its charm from the treacherous spell
The hope of life's mariner, let her name be
One that shall mirror the star of the sea.

O parents so pious, call her Mary, rich name,
Your Mary, our Mary, God's Mary!
It is only in sweetness, however it vary,
In sweetness or shining, but Mary the same.
Luminous name! luminous name!
Call her Mary, rich name.

Call her Mary the Illuminator,
Set to shine in a region of night,
Call her Mary, vase of the Mediator,
Transparent vase of the Infinite.
Immaculate vase of the Mediator,
Mary the Illuminator.

May a sea of bitterness this vase fill?
Ay ye demons and men pour in as ye will.
Recollect "the scent of the rose remains there still,"
Yea and sweeter the longer it stands on the Heavenly Hill

And yet there is one sweet figure I found
At the Eucharist-feet of my Lord;—

It dropped in my thought 'neath the altar-ground,
Was born as I worshipped the Word,—

One emblem of Mary, bright mother, so sweet,
O, another so dear, I never may see;
No doubt it has fallen to crowds at His feet,
Yet as freshly it fell, and new-born to me.

Over the altar, or sweeter upon,
As nearer its Lord 'neath His vails,
A little lamp shines over the stone,
That burns when the vesper prevails.

Wherever the Blessed with us abides,
O, never you rise for it too soon,—
It burns in the breath of the matin-tides,
It burns in the lap of noon.

And that sentinel star by my Lord,
It is only Mary to me;
The mother a-near the crib of the Word;—
But the Mother and Babe I see.

In a flood more chaste than softened gold,
Where the sweet fires never fail,
The handmaid of the Lord behold,
As she stands in her crystal vail.

And I am content, most content,
To recollect her there,
At the feet of the Sacrament,
That sweetest place for prayer.

And that one sweet figure I found
At the Eucharist-feet of my Lord,
That dropped in my thought near the altar-ground
Was born as I worshipped the Word;

That emblem of Mary, bright Mother, so sweet,
O, another so dear, I never may see!
That no doubt has fallen to crowds at His feet,
Yet that fell as freshly, and new-born to me.

Since then, O never that watcher I see,
That whispers my Lord is there,
But the lambent fires dilate for me
As my heart drifts toward in prayer;

As the fires neath her crystal grow,
Nor moon, nor star wears such glow,
So tender, so something nigh to divine,
As my Mary-lamp at the shrine;
And oft as this blessed light I see,
It is but the Heart of Mary to me.

Sweet Illuminatrix
Of the crib and crucifix!
Call her Mary,* the Illuminator,
For the dear lamp at the shrine;
Luminous star of the Mediator,
Day-spring of the Divine.
Mary, the Illuminator:
Call her Mary, Holy Mary.
Mary—Holy Mary,
Lamp of Jesus,
Ora pro nobis.

CHAPTER VII.

EIGHTY DAYS OLD.

"GO YE INTO HIS GATES WITH THANKSGIVING, AND INTO HIS COURTS WITH HYMNS."

WHAT beast for my Anna, a mother
And the babe on her breast lily-bright?
Said Joachim the happy, blest father!
As he walked in the breaking of light,

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* And they called her Mary: "simply to write the name of Mary beautifies the style."—ORSINI.

Through his pastures, the broad fields of his fathers.
What beast shall I choose? The brown mule, Sure-foot,
Or, and he paused, or the ass-foal, snow-white?
Kings' daughters riding white asses shall come;—
I 'll take the white foal for my spouse and the child,
'Tis a bright morning to carry the babe
To the temple, dear blossom of Judah!
A morning that 's beautiful! I wonder
If Judah, or Jacob, or Isaac, knows
She is born—the lily white rose of their house?
There are thoughts in my heart I cannot reach;
Beautiful! mystical! white-browed and smiling,
And born out of time; not the Messiah,
But, O Lord, if I were not so humble;
Yet she, O marvellous heir of our line!—
But where is Asinus, the snow-white foal
Of a mother as hoar-frost for whiteness?
Or, could I bridle him now whose back
Never a rider hath known! Will the young
And stubborn foal of an ass, unused
To the girth, unbroke to the saddle,
Bear docile my treasures? Yet it would pride
Me to have them into Jerusalem ride
Upon the sleek and beautiful colt Asinus.
I find him not; what pity! Ah, Asinus!
If thou knewest the honor in store!

What sendeth him up, the colt, through a grove
Of mulberry near, docile and ready?
How stately he cometh, and sure, methinks;
The hand of Joachim too honest for guile,
Even so innocent, outstretching the bridle,
He cometh still. Ah, favored Asinus,
Thy master will give thee this morn to a queen.
Thou art favored to serve her. Be bridled.
Thou shalt live in legend, and poets shall sing
Of thy journeys to Sion and Egypt,
And back, and tell that you never grew old
In the time that you served her. Just to browse
In the sweet fields of Nazareth all the day long,
And bear so blessed and fair a rider,
Spared the lot of drudges, happy Asinus!

(JOACHIM *goes with the colt toward the house.*)

'Here,' saith the father, 'in this part of the hedge,
Or just in the cleft of the rock above—
As an altar above—is a sacrifice
For the child; a nest I have watched for a month.
Many doves I 've seen in the clefts of the rocks;
None as these snow-white. It grieves me to take;
But ye will die for her, sweet Mary's doves!'

(*Coming unawares upon flowers in the hedge.*)

'Scarlet, purple, golden! all the colors

In Noah's sign—a rainbow in the hedge;
It 's strange, in winter, though, so many flowers!
I will gather for the babe. They blossomed—
Perhaps they blossomed for this morning.'

And he goes through the hedge gathering with taste
And care, smiling at the prick of a thorn,
Dear, great old man, father of the loveliest,
He had an eye and a heart for flowers.
A blossom strange could scarce have found a place
To have put forth in the hedge around his fields,
And he not seen; yet took so quietly
This joy, a casual eye had never marked.
'Tis blessèd, sure, to be so quiet, yet so fond
Of all God's beautiful in tree or flower,
Or living form that with bright wings beautify
The air and—God's fair creation everywhere.

Asinus stands looking wisely on.
An ass is a very wise looking beast—
Conceited, perhaps, somewhat, or wisely grave
The figure for Rubens, sleek all his limbs,
Covered with short, soft bristle, smooth, snowy,
"His ears?" belonging to an uncrossed line,
Rather long; yet, none too long for an ass!
Just two trumpet-flowers laid back on his head;

Just two white Japan lilies, the sun shining
Down into their depths :—waiting Asinus!

Meanwhile our heart is yearning for the house,
We cannot bear to stay from Mary long.
While Joachim picks flowers we might look in ;
Forsooth this morn the house is gay with guests,
Elisabeth hath come from Hebron down,
With train of servants and of friends, forsooth,
The house this morn is gay with holy mirth.

ELISABETH.

(*Bending in admiration over the cradle of the little* MARY.)

There 's a rose at length on our rod
That Jesse, our father, this while
May ponder in Limbus and smile.
A rose that is worthy his rod :
Worthy, and more,
And I almost adore!

O, Anna! they told me the child, thy child
Was the pride of the Nazareth hills;
Beautiful! beautiful! beautiful child!
O rather the pride of the heavenlier hills!
What the babe of Eve might have been,
Had sin not entered to Eden in;

Might have been, and more
And I almost adore!

Eighty days old* is the babe, I kept the count,
And waited this morn ere I came to your mount.
I have come, happy mother, your honors to share,
O precious the treasure! together we'll bear
To the temple and shrine of Jehovah the Lord,
And pay the glad offering He asks from His word.
Ah, Zachery, my lord, will gaze with surprise,
Has a babe to his altar dropped out of the skies?
I am sure he must go mystified on with the rite,
While angels, enraptured, gaze down on the sight.
O haste, let us go! But, stay, I have brought
To our fair little princess a mantle, inwrought
With the device of Judah in jewels and gold;
Let our Mary-babe drape in its regal fold.

[Oh, bear it away! the vesture of pride!
Ye angels, behold her babe-eyes turn aside!
From the face of the babe never wandered her look;
The heart of the mother divined at a glance;
The eyes of the saint were held as entranced,
And forth from her casket, as dreaming, she took

* The first-born, if a son, was presented to the Lord, and the mother made her offering of purification when the child was forty days old; but, if a daughter, when eighty days had expired after the birth.

A mantle, whose dye
Was the same as the sky,
Where the lily impearled with the silver-leafed rose,
In a field of azure, immaculate glows.
She placed it side by side the mantle gay;
The scarlet kindled in the morning's lavish ray.]

ELISABETH.

Dear princess babe of Judah, which for you,
King David's colors, or the Nazareth violet's hue?
The blue! The blue alone the dear babe's sweet eyes drew:
'Why wonder, sister,' Anna said, 'Why wonder, since the heavens are blue?'
"Enough! Enough!" cried sweet Elisabeth in strange content,
And toward the babe, as touched with silent homage, bent.

(JOACHIM *comes to the door with the doves in his breast, flowers in his hand, and leading Asinus—tethers Asinus to a post of stone.*)

And Joachim, unheark'ning, drawing nigh,
Came in with flowers of every dye,
And holding them before the mystic child,
Again she culled the modest blue and smiled;
And so, the mother wrapped her in the heavenlier hue,
And ere the lawns had lost the freshness of their dew,
The little Mary, hope of Israel and ours,
Was borne along the hedgeway daft with flowers,

Adown the winding thyme-sweet path of Nazareth hill,
And through the conscious glens of hill-crowned Galilee,
Where paused the light chamois from some high cliff to see
What it might be.—Our Little Lady's cavalcade, so simply grand,
Now pressing onward to, and upward through Samaria's schismatic land,
On, onward to, and through Judea's fairer plain; and all that day
'Twas winter, but the road ne'er lacked for flowers their way.

CHAPTER VIII.

ANNA'S PURIFICATION.

"SAINT ANNA, MIRROR OF DEVOTION, PRAY FOR US."

'TWAS past; the sacrifice of peace. They had
Unto the temple come, transported, yet serene,
And as the babe was brought a sweetness touched
All hearts, an aroma more than flowers,
A little lily was offered up to God,
An incense rose more fresh than burning breath
Of all perfumes swung in the golden censers

Of the priests. Zachery gave benediction
Heavenlier than erst, dear heavenliest priest!
And sweet Elisabeth, lost in an uplift
Of the spirit at the time, forgot to watch.
In echo rich through colonnaded aisles
Low dies the lingering hymn: Still Anna kneels.
Blest spot! the shrine where she has offered up
The sweet thanksgivings for so dear a birth,
How can she leave? dear saint! and Anna kneels,
Here had her pure heart in her fair youth
Been embalmed. 'Twas here th' graces that distil
And nourish virtues in the heart she drank in,
In her early morn, as flowers drink dews,
Blest spot! The chambers are but just above,
And not afar the Holy Place. A daughter
For the House of God, how many waiting years,
For this, how had she longed! Had she not vowed
Her here, O, ever she was born? dear babe!
And only brought her child again to tell
Into the Ear that slumbers never, she was
His at time—such time as Judah's royal maids
Were wont to be surrendered at His shrine;
And—and God is asking somewhat more.
Could she not sacrifice yet more to Him?
And she is answering. "How?" How could
The Mother of the Mother of martyrs

Answer God—her God? Each day what pearl to give—
Those tender child-caresses every day;
And Joachim, kneeling opposite,
Lain at the feet of God in his high prayer,
His soul has risen yet where souls lose all
But God, yet prays with her,—then softly dropped
To recollectedness and care—what dear care,
Father of our little Lady—Mary's father!

JOACHIM.

(*Still upon his knees, gazing upon* ANNA *as she continues her prayer.*)

'Tis worth to be a woman, a mother,
To be! How fervently she folds the babe,
Finding not yet the end unto her prayer;
As tremulous and bright as some soft star
Within a summer evening sky—Stars, being
So nigh Heaven, alway tremble—The bright joy
Goes to her brow as tremulously up,
And forms a sort of wavering or halo there:
And the dear babe: Her face I cannot see,
There's shine upon the head, but the fair face
Is lain upon the breast. Nay, just beneath;
She whispers to her mother's heart in prayer,
Or prays with her.'
And thou wert right, sweet spouse.
O it was beautiful to be the mother

Of the Blessed Virgin, was it not? next
Unto being her. The Rose Bush of Mary,
Gay with her one sweet Rose Immaculate.
"In that day shall be the bud of the Lord,
In magnificence." O it was beautiful
To be the mother of the Blessed Virgin!
What a sweet throne in heaven she must have,
So beautifully next the Queen! meek saint!
O it was almost like,—No, nothing is like
To Mary's mystic motherhood, yet next,
And one mother in all the hoary ages,
Of a human un-sin-touched babe. Rejoice,
O Anna, and clasp thy matchless treasure
Close and lovingest! She doth; yet as God
Sends down His askings to her soul, a light
Breaks over all her face, and it is like
The fire that flashes up from sacrifice.

And, dear Elisabeth beside, her face
Is in her mantle folds. I think she weeps:
Perhaps a flickering hope as Anna, God
Has visited, is springing in her heart,
Perhaps, and so she asks again that son,
Who from her tenderness out to the wild
Ere yet shall go, and thence a desert-saint
Ascend to herald and receive the Christ.

The Christ, who, ever as our blessed eyes
Behold the infant Mary, near appears.

(JOACHIM *and* ANNA *on their way back to Nazareth.*)

ANNA.

(*Pressing her babe more fondly to her breast.*)

O she is mine, mine yet, these three dear years more!

JOACHIM.

Three years?

ANNA.

God will so like it best, I think.

JOACHIM.

And now I know His angel dropped that seed
Into our heart at prayer; and she is not
As other children, Anna, we have known;
They who have most should render most to God.

ANNA.

We will return her when three years come
Unto the Lord.

[And so they journey home.]

CHAPTER IX.

THE SEVEN JOYS OF ANNA.

Immaculate infancy continued—Immaculate childhood imagined.

"A REPRESENTATION OF THE CHILDHOOD OF MARY SHOULD MAKE US SENSIBLE OF ALL THE GOOD ODOR OF JESUS CHRIST."

"SAINT ANNA, ROD OF JESSE, PRAY FOR US!"

AND the babe grew and lovelier each day,
Such time as sunsets tender down our hearts,
Than when the dawn looked in to brighten Anna's Flower.
'Twas always dawn a little earlier
On Nazareth hill than elsewhere in Judea,
And alway a little brighter dawn. Sunsets
Seemed likewise to linger there. Sweet spot!
An ever-beautifying bud grows here.
For "Mary's understanding, as the day
In some fair, favored region, scarce has dawn."
All things around at sight she seems to know.
Now she would in her cradle lie and watch
The even threads that Anna spun, and smile
Back to her mother's eyes; but never wept.
She was not born with wail ready in the throat.

As given to demonstrate how lovely might
Have been unfallen man, all things went well
With her. And the first joy that Anna had—
To see her babe come to her arms in smile.
It was propitious, was it not? O smile,
That shall in many a desolated spot
Re-brighten earth and yet make glad the city
Of our God, unto what shall I liken
Thee? The smile of Mary! what is the smile
Of Mary like? Look at a rose that faces
The east in the morning—under the bough
At noon 'neath which the lily crept to grow
Unseen, and there watch the sun dip his eye
Into her cup; see the softened glow run
Over the white lining of the chalice—
The delicious shiver of the lily in the sun.
What is the smile of Mary like?—as the smile
Of Agnes and Cecilia, the apostle John;
Gather and condense all saint-smiles; distil
All the sweetness of the saints, or catch the smile
Of Gabriel that September morning,
As he stood over the couch of Anna
And the babe new-born. The smile of Mary;
What is the smile of Mary like? Peaceful,
Ineffable smile of Mary! I have
It! Thank God, and her! one sinner penance

Doth upon the earth and Heaven overlooks,
Jesus on the head of His poor penitent
Drops a smile, and the virgins that the Lamb
Surround smile with Him—and all the angels.
The smile of Mary, O it is between—
A something between the luminous smile
Of the virgins that follow the Lamb
And the smile of Jesus. Ineffable!
Royal! nearer the God-smile! The Queen's smile!
The smile of the Queen leading His Virgins.

II.

VIOLET OF GOD.

And the second joy that Anna had,
To watch her spotless infant sleep; this, too,
Was an every-day joy, from the fair morn
Of that fairest life! O that first fair sleep!
Anna had almost feared to venture child
So ethereal, at first, lest someway
She might steal from her in sleep into Heaven,
And forget to return; then as she watched,
Smiled in delicious joy at her poor fears;
And the babe smiled in sleep, and as she smiled,
To Anna it would seem 't were sweeter thus;
The hidden fragrancies of that pure soul,

Stealing so out to her. Philosophers
Have thought that babes so late from Heaven,
Not quite estranged, see angels, as they smile
In dreams, and these but any common babes.
What must the little mother of Christ see?

Who has not wished that they might know
What thoughts through infant souls first flow?
But we have never longed to read a soul as this,
Little Violet of God! Dear babe of bliss!

God's little Violet in its tender dews,
No other flower so white admiring Heaven views.
"I sleep, but my heart waketh!" teach us, too,
To sleep with God, dear Flower, as you!

Soft! soft! Anna-mother's bliss is
Your eyelids; soft, soft kisses!
Happy Anna! earth holds not another
Such a spotless babe and mother!
Little white Violet of God,
Perfuming all the Nazareth-sod:
Soft! soft! Anna-mother's bliss is
Your eyelids; soft, soft kisses!

Anna and Joachim lived most apart,
And yet the children would sometime come
From the hamlet just below, and vie

To see who might the cradle rock—pleasant
And eager emulants! We, too, would have
Contested for such post. Ah, who would not
The cradle of the infant Mary rock?
From happiest penitent, because the most
Forgiven, showering her kisses and her tears,
Up to the saintly priest and red cardinal—
'The red hat might take the eye of a babe,
Wouldn't it, eh?' I think it might Mary's, an' cloak,
And gloves; she could see so plain His blood.
But to keep this cradle good a-jog, bishops
And cardinals may rock; confessors all,
Have Mary's cradle rocked: saint-hearts are much
Like mothers', after all—Anna-mother's—
Even our Pio IXth, holiest man, might reach
The cross-slippered foot to touch that cradle
Would it stop. Ah, our great Father loveth
That babe: none more than he. It is, dear babe!
His own little Mary *Immaculate.*
And the benignest brows that so illuminate
Whenever upon his breast his dear Lord
In the blessed Sacrament he bears—
As some sweet Corpus Christi morn, mid flowers,
And lights, and acolytes, and priests, and crowds,
Knelt—prostrate—for the glory—sweetness—joy—
Would wear a radiance softer only, somewhat,

As he leaned nearer the cradle of the babe—
"Immaculate! Immaculate!" Yes, Father,
Holy Father, all of thy children, too, see
Her so with thee, and love thee more, who hast
Proved most love for her.
Rock, rock, dear children,
We come back to you. We, too, would have been
One of you, and Anna, careful mother
Of the Mirror of Justice there, will give
Each child its turn; all look for equity
With her—Rock, rock, O, it is beautiful
To rock the cradle of the skies, and see
Her smile to God in her sleep! to gather
Half its sanctity might straightway make a saint.
How good is God to thee, Anna! and can
You, pious reader, wonder more we love
To linger so, to gently tip that way—
Just this way now—we love to rock the Rose,
The mystic cradle of the little mother
Of a God; our little Rose-in-bud, breathing
So fragrantly of heaven in her sleep.
———————— Mary is odoriferous;
And perfume from this cradle floats, that charms
Our affections, so the outer world we lose,
And bend unto the cradle closer down,
Our conscious hand grows weak; how dare it stir

So holy ark, cradle-house of the mother
Of our God? but may not pause, or she may miss
Our little care—she knows even in sleep,
And so might grieve if we could so forget
When she so loves such poor and little care.
Dear mother, we will never leave undone
Aught that is sweet that we for thee may do;
And all things done for thee are those most sweet.
And it is such a joy to watch thy rest,
Babe-princess of the skies, we can but sing.
O when we cannot sing, let us be dumb!
Dumb! dumb forevermore! when we cannot
For Mary write, let our poor hand forget
Its cunning and our tongue be dumb! Dearest
And sufficient holy vocation, let
Us watch all her growth, growth we can't measure,
Understand, define, but can someway feel,
Thank God! Let us attend her steps; our world
Is brighter for Mary having in it lived.

III.

And, our thrice-crowned-with-joy Anna had the joy
Of the breast. A mother's breast is holy
Unto her babes, and makes the mother nearer
By so much more than all the other ties
That blood or love may bind, it were not natural
Or pious, could we pass unadmiring by,

Dear pillow! fountain, food, all that is sweet
To babes and helplessness, never had child
Before so known; yet so her self-denial
Found its birth. And so it came, one day,
Anna bethought a tiny cup to bring
Of goat's milk to the child—it was so fresh,—
To try: to see her watch the pretty cup,
And taste. She touched the cup, thus rendered grace,
And drank; but that same hour when Anna offered
Her the pap, she kissed the breast and covered
It; and Anna knew her babe had sacrificed,
And sighed as mother's sigh; 'tis such a joy!
They so sweet learn to give is blessed more
Than to receive.

IV.

What time that other children creep—
It was a tender summer afternoon
Upon the hills, and Anna she had brought
Her spinning-wheel and little Mary out
Unto a clump of fig-trees on the lawn,
Upon the grasses to the flowers, saying,
She may creep while I may spin. 'Tis sweet t' see
A young child creep—the pretty feebleness!
'Tis a humility that takes all eyes.
Charmed with first half-escape it stops,

The little aspirant to reach, looks o'er the way,
Rounds to a heap, puts out the dimpled hand—
An' such a babe-glee leaps through every little ivory limb,
Over the crowing brow and out the baby's eyes!
Our infant Mary might have risen up
And walked, scarce doubt, but would she rob
A doting mother of so pleasant joy to watch?
An' then, 'twere humbler sure to creep awhile,
Like any common child; and so she raised
Her ever tender recollected eyes
Unto the skies and crept unto the flowers.

V.

The little Mary one year old: there was
None other so blest and happy mother
In all dear Nazareth as Anna to-day.
She has grown tall for a child but one year;
Yet delicate withal as the one lily
In her mother's pot beside the wheel
And Anna is just longing now to see
Her totter prettily across the floor,
And so as answering to the gracious wish,
Dearest daughter, from off her little mat,
Close to her mother's feet, as tranquilly
She rises up as if, and it were not
Strange thing to walk, and so her mother wished.

With that same angel grace of a born princess
Of the skies, something as she will one day cross
Th' floor of heaven, or that sea of glass Saint John
Saw, drawn to the casement by the luring flowers
And chorus of the waiting birds that call
To see the beauty of her face looking
From the lattice forth. Behold she standeth
At her lattice! looking out into the broad
And peaceful pasturages around—dear child!
And up into the soft skies overspread.
Now let us haste unto the temple up;
Is she not weaned? said zealous Joachim;
Yes, she is weaned, yet not as other babes
Deprived, the prudent Anna made reply,
And children while so tender that receive
In many ways a mother's breast, best thrive.
We offer so, O dear delight! our care
For God:—and zealous Joachim was stayed.

VI.

Anna had ever kept one lily brought
From dear Bethlehem, in pot of clay
It grew, and when she spun, the lily's pot
Stood by the busy wheel, within the floor,
And when she did not spin, close with the wheel

It hugged the wall; in brief it was the friend,
Or insepatable companion—beauty
With industry wed; and the slim stalk
Never bore but one flower at a time.
Perhaps 't was figurative; for sure, our babe
As soon as ever she could walk was drawn
Unto the solitary lily flowering
By the wall: just hovering o'er, behold her stand,
Touching the snowy blossom so gently
With her little waxen palm, and drinking
From its pure corolla all its sweetness
And sereneness in, dear serener self!
God's Lily, looking at Anna's,
O it was pretty! and so Anna thought,
Gracious Anna, looking on her two lilies.
O it was joy enough for her to watch
Each day her fairer flower, putting forth
Each little leaf, aromatic, tender,
Softly silent, all, all so sweet for God.
'T is said, I think by John of Damascene,
Till past the first serene year lapsed, and half
The second folded down its fragrant leaf
With that, she kept the silence of her lips
Inviolate. Modest and recollect
Of God, how could she haste, pure child, to speak?
'T is such a spell to silence learn; yet learned,

Yet tasted well, dear calm, while still, but scarce,
How it envelops and seals up the soul
With Paradise. An' Anna saw th' dear child move
As some sweet novice in a first retreat,
Where no jar of vain words comes in to break
The harmonies with God, and shrinks to burst
The dear chain of her charm, starts at the first call
Back to the other world so good escaped,
And fain would stay the dear Carthusian still.
And Anna watched her peaceful child, and said
More joy, her narrow heart for it must grow;
Meek saint! O leave her yet her silent child,
The time will come she will so yearn to hear
The music of that voice,—as late the totter
Of those feet upon her floor,—to it her heart
Must grow, meek saint! O leave her yet the strong
And growing joy in that rich silentness!

The lilies grow, each perfumed by the other's breath.
The one, but a poor perishable flower,
Renewed each Mary-day or sabbath-tide,
The day I'm told our little maid was born,
Or so I think—how could it otherwise
Have been so sweet arranged? and did not th' Christ
All things sweetest in an' around her arrange,
He so fair saw, of her He would be born?

And Mary's day,* and the dear Lord's day, stand
As Aurora and morning in the Church.
And the lily of the wheel never lacked a flower,
And the fairer Flower mute, for God,
Spake not, save as the lily by its sweetness,
Save as all flowers by their fragrance speak,
Waters by their clearness, skies by their depth
And brilliancy—as God speaks. Pure child, God
Saw silence the atmosphere of her soul,
The sky over the garden of her heart,
Where I know not what of virtues grew,
Sovereignty, and holiness, and purity,
And fervor, sending their odors up through
Unto the golden floor.

AND THE VIIth JOY.

A threefold benediction stayed to fall
Over the six, something as a Pope's crown,
Three-tiered—a joy in Trinity: and God
Looked to that dear cottage, down with so "pure,
Open, loving, peaceful eye," it wrapped
His little one in so divine repose
She never thought to speak till God would hear
The sweet praise of her voice. When it is wrote

* Saturday, or the Jewish sabbath.

She lifted first her eyes to heaven, then spoke
The precious word—"It is a mystery,"
Says one, "that we may only learn in Heaven,
Secret of Heaven, I you respect and wait."
'T will be one of the joys of Paradise
To learn, another, and not reverent less,
And it was *God*. And though but one sweet word,
For preciousness more worth than all the prate
Since Eve first said to Adam "it is good."
Oh, sad mistake and sin! words go so wrong
Since. But hark—a little girl among the hills
Of Judah speaks, the wisdom and the grace
Of whose first word excels all that the sage
Or orator hath rounded out to eloquence.
Whatever, it was beautiful—that first word.
I think 't was God: what other could so beautiful
Have been, and that for her? would the mother
Of the All-beautiful offer to other first?
Or less than the first beautiful have offered
First unto Him? And so by argument,
Must have been God, than which there is no name.
Other babes lisp fast upon the mother-knee,
And prattle many pretty words so free,
It is a payment unto her who bore
All count beyond: and mothers most will claim
Whether it so quite talks to other ears,

It says, the dear babe, *mother* first.
Dear silent star of morning to His day,
Higher than the stars she looked and led serene
The note of praise. Never had one before,
So said God, never one before so wanted
God, never has one since so confessed God,
Never had God upon the earth before
Been so adored. With her it is first God.
And as her yet exceeding great reward,
The Infinite, Himself, shall, so to speak,
Abridge unto a little child and put
His arms about her neck, and His first word
Shall be to her, my *mother*. "Let the name
Of God be praised!"
This joy we have thought
Was as our Father's tiara. We have the first tier
Of the coronal seen, and to catch a note
Beyond, as sometimes when saints die, or soar,
As Montalbert's "Dear Elisabeth," strains burst
Upon the ear, and rippling over all,
One that the saint knows—to hear *her* sing,
Leave the intermediate band, last to unfold,
And turn unto the third—to hear her sing—
But first let us imagine ourself there,
At Anna's cottage, or her lattice-bower
A little time before—a day would not

Be very long—overlooking, unobserved,
Our treasures, Anna, MARY, Joachim.
It was the last year with Anna, on the hill;
The end of two years, or

THIRD BIRTHDAY.

The mother kept the vigil, and a sweet feast,
Made as erst. It was nice to see how Anna,
Good wife, could get up these very little feasts,
So humble was the board, so small the cot.
To-day, the wheel disbanded sat, fenced in by flowers
Against the wall, the lily-pot conspicuous stood
Before, and littler vases she had placed
With sweet mignonette, jasmine buds,
And such delicate sprays as give harmonies;
It so said "rest," "we environ thee," "rest;"
Rest, good industrious wheel, for Mary's day.
The board was narrow, true, yet there was room;
And Anna had roasted the tender kid
With herbs, spicy and choice for th' spitted flesh,
And garnished it with doves' eggs, boiled and laid
In little rows, or tiers, around the dish,
Inner-ringed with thin-cut slices, golden
And white, unto the meat, crisp, savory,
And ready to eat; and bits of home-bread,
Toasted, not one bit burned, and a bottle

Of rare wine, the dear Elisabeth had sent
From Hebron down, before her babe was born,
And Anna, frugal housewife, had reserved
Unto this feast, and the barley crackers
That Anna knew how to in the ashes roast,
And make so sweet, and pitchiolas dried
In honey—O, 't was a delicious feast;
Little, but good—and Mary she was there,
Angelic child! Her thoughtful sire had brought
Roses from a distant hedge, the eve before,
Where primroses, sweeter than elsewhere grew;
Dear child! And did she know they came from spot
Where Joachim kneeled, Immaculate conception morn?
That spot whereon the angel stood?—She smiles,
We see, and knots them in a wreath to crown
The basket of her grapes, for Anna's board;
So she would Anna help; so she will help
All those for love of her to ply the distaff,
Grow the flower to deck the altar, spread the feast
Of Holy Church, touch the seraphic brush,
Or weave the crown of grateful song, dear help!
So Anna-mother instituted Mary's feasts,
As we may love to heed when one we keep.
One? why we could not one spare to count,
And love to think how Anna kept them first.
Anna and Joachim, great saints! If less

Of Joachim we say, 't is simply told,
He was not the mother, but the patriarch;
Yet growing gently toward the child again:
Souls come from God a child, and as they near
To God again so grow into the child.
And His protecting presence while unseen,
Is but as our good angel alway by.
Hovering anear the threshold of the cot,
If not within. This will be more his year,
His jewel-year, for the lovely angel,
Taking the form of a little daughter
On the green sward at his side. He will take
Her out to see the doves' nests and to hunt
The berries in the hedge; dear, doting sire!
Had he not taken her upon the back
Of white Asinus, this morn through the fields,
And next into the purpled vintage down,
Bearing a basket in her tiny hands
To bring some grapes to Anna, for the feast?
And he could not as erst, say "Anna-spouse,
I think that we may, her to the temple take,
The mother's time and his was coming fast.
He could not now forestall, dear sire.
This eve,
As Anna sang—sat at the pleasant lattice
With her little Blessed-Virgin-girl,

As the round moon rose over the hills
Of Galilee, and sang the same olden psalm
She never had for an evening missed
Since the bright morning first she carried
Her unto the temple up, as has been told,
Our little maid who ever seemed to hold
Some new joy for her mother more—and more
These special favored days, establishing,
We find so soon, her sweet rule to pay back—
Our holy little maid, her young, pure voice
Lifted, and alternate with her mother sang.
Do not the angels that in and around this "house
Of angels evermore," flit, bend nearer
To this casement down?—Do not the angels
In heaven hear? God hears! Jesus hears!—She sings!

(ANNA *and* MARY *singing alternately.*)

ANNA.

How lovely are Thy tabernacles, Lord, O Lord of Hosts,*
My soul longeth and fainteth for the beauty of Thy Courts.

MARY.

My heart was touched, my lips awoke, my heart and flesh
Have in the living God rejoiced, pour forth my songs afresh.

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* Ps. lxxxiii.

Anna.

The sparrow there hath found a house, the turtle there her nest;
E'en at Thy altars, O my King, my God, the very birds may rest.

Mary.

Blessed are they who dwell in Thy dear House, O Lord,
For they shall taste forever more the sweetness of Thy word.

Anna.

O blessed is the man whose help comes down from Thee,
And who hath in his heart disposed, whose flesh and heart agree—

Mary.

In virtues to ascend by steps where he hath fixed the place
Within this darksome vale of tears, as strengthened by Thy grace,

Anna.

From virtue on to virtue, the ways of pleasantness to trace.
The God of Gods in Sion shall be seen, the glory of His face!

Mary.

O Lord God of Hosts! and Thou my prayer shalt hear,
And give, O God of Jacob, unto me gracious ear.

ANNA.

Our Protector, Lord, behold, and blot from out Thy book
Thy people's sin—upon the face of Thy Anointed look!

MARY.

For one day in Thy Courts, forsaken and alone,
Is better than a thousand the sweetest elsewhere known.

ANNA.

I have chosen, Lord of Hosts, O how longingly,
Rather, Lord, an abject in Thy blessed House to be,

MARY.

Rather, Lord, than to banquet in the palaces of sin;
Open, Lord, Thy lovely Courts, Lord of Hosts, and take me in.

Child-speech and song the outer bands:
And now we may that inner ring—flashing
As a jewelled circlet in its dewy splendors,
In the triple crown of Anna's seventh joy—
Admire, and it is this, to hear Mary pray.
A joy we have not dared as yet t'garland
Round with our short praise, or upon to gaze,

Save only as we look at stars afar.
Nothing could be more gushing than the hymn
Or psalm at sunset: "I have chosen, Lord,
Rather in Thy house to be; open, Lord
Of Hosts, Thy lovely Courts, and take me in."
Rippling for hours in sweetness through th' heart
Of Joachim as he stood beneath the stars,
As his fathers did, to pray, and yet it was,
So Anna thought, edifying more to hear
Her pray, and Joachim beside his hearth
Always sat with his head bowed in his hands
To listen then; and whether she opened
Her pure lips that God and her dear parents
Might hear, to so edify their pious hearts,
And praise God with her most sweet create voice,
As vocal in the morning she might pray,
Or as vesper from the twilight deepened,
As some little Saint-statue knelt, for grace
And motionlessness, or purity, she prayed
With adoring hands, brows over which th' halo
Brightened softly, lips that moved first, and soon
You could not see breath-stir thereupon, th' soul
Distilled so deep in the sweet heart sending
I know not what of fervency, perfume—
Oil of all saint-prayers—silent up to God.
I know not whether it were edifying

More to hear, or goodly more to see.
The unction of her vocal prayer was like
As ointment poured at the altar forth,
The beauty of her breathless vespers
As the sweetness of an ostensorium
On a Benediction-altar, Sunday eves,
Waiting the Christ in His ciborium-house.
He will come forth for that. He will come down
For this, and then this Virgin Vase shall glow
Softly illuminate as an ostensorium
On a Benediction-altar, Christ enshrined,—
Faith showing Christ through both. O thou chaste Vase
Of heavenliest crystal for the dear Christ,
Shine all for Him! Expand, illumine, wait;
Come, come, sweet Holy-Ghost-Dove, engraven
This pure Vase for Messias; make it beautiful
And elaborate for Jesus. "All for Jesus."

CHAPTER X.

HOLY LESSONS,

OR THE DEAR PARENTS OF MARY TEACHING THEIR LITTLE BLESSED VIRGIN GIRL.

"ST. ANNA, ORACLE OF PROPHETS, PRAY FOR US."

And when the morning had come, Anna would take her little daughter to the lattice that opened to the east, and seating herself

upon a low bench by the casement, Mary kneeling at her lap, would unroll an ancient Scripture-copy, treasured in the family of Joachim, and instruct the child, and the Virgin child seeming learned as any other child, only, and Anna marvelled at this, the seed once cast always sprang fruitful at first, or never did Anna have to twice say, such is the letter, such the word, little daughter, and so this sweet child learned her letters from the scriptures, and Anna was Mary's teacher, and Mary knew the scriptures from her first or second year. Timothy "knew the scriptures from a child." Did the mother of Timothy's Master know less? And Anna learned her moreover, as all good mothers first learn their babes, a prayer for the morning and the evening, and the dear child, Mary, added to the prayer as she grew. And the prayer came before the lesson Anna taught. Behold Anna, the little Mary at her knee, devoutly raising her eyes to heaven. Behold the admirable little Mary raising her joined hands and lifting her eyes like her devout mother sweetly up to God. And the prayer might have been.

Anna.

"*O Lord my God, to Thee do I watch at the break of day.*"

"*Praise the Lord, ye children: Praise ye the name of the Lord.*"

Mary.

"*For Thy mercy is better than lives; Thee my lips shall praise.*"

"*From the rising up of the sun to the going down of the same.*"

Anna.

"*For Thee my soul hath thirsted; for Thee, my flesh, O how many ways.*"

"Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth forevermore."

MARY.

"Who dwelleth on high and regardeth the things that are lowly,
Who raiseth up the needy from the earth?"

ANNA.

"Let Him not suffer thy foot to be moved; neither let Him sleep that keepeth thee."

MARY.

"We are the sheep of His pasture."

ANNA.

"May God bless us."

MARY.

"And all the ends of the earth fear Him."

ANNA.

Amen.

And Joachim always made prayers for his righteous household, praying with his face toward Jerusalem. But let us not wander from the twain at the casement, Mary saying amen as never purest

lips before. "*So be it*"—and after the amen, coming not back from the prayer too soon, Mary having arisen and standing beside, both would sometime look from the casement in silence, retiring devoutly thus from the immediate audience-feet of Jehovah, to this poor life back and its manifold cares. Albeit a life with them so simple, direct, peaceful, sacred, off shut, it seems as we gaze to it back—as we gaze to it back from our lives and surroundings—as we watch its lapse in this Holy Hill-home, as but one prayer, one continued and harmonious and perfect prayer unto God. Beautiful life, and was it not such? The life of Joachim, of Anna, of Mary, this simple human household-trinity of perfect ones—the immediate ancestors of the Messiah! Dear recollect mother; dearer recollect child! Anna, looking from the lattice into the garden where a tender dew yet lay upon every leaf and flower, would be the first to say, "Prayer is an embalmed dew," or, observant of the palms stirring in rich exuberance in the morning breeze—"The righteous shall grow as a palm-tree in Sion, as a palm-tree planted beside the waters," as a bird alighted on a branch and stirred the vines in the casement over their heads—the birds were never afraid to alight too near the Blessed Virgin—"Praise the Lord, all ye fowls of the air," and the bird chirped louder, or the rose at the lattice last blown was admired.—"A pure soul is a beautiful rose," her pure soul caressing thus as it first returned all things for God. Did one who wrote, "Prayer is a love-bath, into which the soul plunges—she is as if drowned in love. God holds the interior soul fast, as a mother holds the head of her child in her hands while she covers it with kisses and caresses."* Did he see a vision of Anna and Mary at their matins? At their matins at the lattice before the sunrise? Anna was wont to come before the sunrise, that they might see the sun, between the prayer and the lesson, come up over Abarim. "O ye sun; bless the Lord," "O ye mountains and hills, bless ye the Lord!" Bless him in the morning when he comes to you first; Bless Him in the evening when He covers you last with light as a

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* *Cure de Ars.*

garment. Bless the Lord always. Joachim was this moment saying, walking in his cattle-spotted fields, "Bless the Lord, all ye beasts and cattle of the fields." "O let the earth bless the Lord! Let it praise and exalt him above all forever." "Bless the Lord, all things that spring forth upon the earth." "O ye fountains, bless the Lord!" Looking back now to see the mother and child at the lattice—he was old-getting now, and could see objects so in the distance best, and of all objects best his Anna and the child. God, in His loving kindness, so the Father to this father, never off-shut that vision from his eyes. He could see the mother and child however, afar, more distinct this morn than even the cot, those two faces at the lattice, tender, devout, full of praise—saying as he walks, looking back to the lattice, "The Lord hath done great things for us; we have become very joyful." "Who maketh the barren woman to dwell in her house, the joyful mother of children." "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." "Going on their way they went and wept: scattering their seed. But returning they come with joyfulness: bringing their sheaves with them." Looking at Anna from his seat, under a sycamore—keeping in range of the window, that precious window! and Joachim kept in range of the lattice, seated under a sycamore, seeing Anna unroll her parchment and teach the child—"She hath sought wool and flax and hath wrought by the counsel of her hands, her lamp shall not be put out in the night. She hath put out her hand to strong things: and her fingers have taken hold of the spindle. She hath opened her hand to the needy and stretched out her hand to the poor. She shall not fear for her house in the cold of snow: for all her domestics are clothed with double garments. She made fine linen and sold it. Strength and beauty are her clothing: and she shall laugh in the latter day. She hath opened her hand to wisdom, and the law of clemency is on her tongue. She hath looked well to the paths of her house, and hath not eaten her bread idle. Who hath found a valiant woman? far, and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her." Looking at the little Mary, now reading to Anna, "She hath doves' eyes"—arising, proceeding leisurely toward the dear house—"My spikenard yielded the odor of sweet-

ness." As the lily among thorns so is my love among the daughters. "Now is the winter past, the rain is over and gone."

And having taught her little Virgin girl,
Then Anna, she would close the holy roll
And talk of Eden and the serpent's guile,
And of the woman whose victorious heel
Should bruise his head, while the child's eyes would float
As in a dream she almost saw; or else
Of Esther and Persia's king, and how she asked
Perfumes not of the king's chamberlain,
Save such as he gave, and how she fasted, prayed,
And went by obedience before the king
For her people Israel in, and fainted
For the majesty in the king's presence seen;
And then he held the golden sceptre out.
And as Anna rehearsed this, Joachim,
Having drawn unto his peaceful hearthstone in,
Said interiorly, "Our Esther!"—then would call
Her to his side as Anna turned to mind
The house, and taking Anna's lessons up,
Expound on them. And she would listen close,
She so loved to hear her father's reverent voice
Telling Scripture lore. How Joseph was sold
And carried into Egypt down. He had
A grand and simple way of telling how
He his brethren met—and of the little babe

That was born and in the bulrushes hid;
And yet of the bush* that he saw burn
On Horeb unconsumed; and the child's face
Would take a brighter glow here. Or of th' plagues
That smote Egypt, and the Red Sea clove,
And Israel coming up dryshod through,
Miriam, her namesake, singing on the shore,
"The horse and his rider he hath overthrown!
Pharaoh and his captains and all his hosts,
In the Red Sea drowned." But most of all
Were she moved by his account of Abraham,
When called by God to offer his son Isaac
On Moriah up—and Joachim would haste
To speak of Rebekah by the well,
Or the Queen of Saba, who came to see
Solomon, both types of the child he taught.

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* The Fathers recognize Mary in the figure of the Burning Bush; and the Rabbins teach that there appeared in the midst of the wild rosebush, that Moses stood with his feet bared on the bleak summit of Horeb and saw burn, a countenance "resembling for loveliness and splendor nothing before seen." "Clearer than the lightning, more brilliant than the flame." "Those wild roses," says Orsini, "emblematical of modest maidens, who shed their sweet perfume in solitude, and who are made resplendent by their contact with Deity, without having their spotless white and delicate blush any way tainted, these are the most admirable images of Mary, that mystical rose of the new law . . . The delicate and odoriferous rosebush through which Moses perceived the Divinity."

CHAPTER XI.

INDUSTRY.

"SHE LAYETH HER HAND TO THE SPINDLE."

SHE must need this year good improve (Anna),
Her little daughter must have robes befitting
Meet her state, poor, but one of David's line;*
And she must go with vestures beautiful
Unto the golden chambers of the virgins up;
Yet busy, careful, but no troubled haste,
Too well her thoughtful hands for this hath spun
The two years gone, putting, whene'er she found
The softer fleece, this for her wardrobe by,

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* "Not only St. Joachim but also St. Anna was an illustrious scion of the royal Davidic line." FATHER VALLEJO, who also cites Calinus and Siandi. Anna was moreover the last and most perfect woman of the old law. The pastoral manners of the ancestors of the Messiah receive a new lustre when contemplated in connection with Anna and the Mother of God. Anna is the last and most illustrious of those admirable matrons, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Abigail, Nœmi, Judith, Deborah, and the mother of the Machabees, that the Scriptures "praise in such magnificent terms." And Mary "from her cradle received the happiest impressions from the example given her by the holy patriarch, St. Joachim, her father, and St. Anna, her mother."

Which she would color of that Tyrian dye
Only, 't is said, the Tyrian weavers knew,
And the merchants of Tyre trafficked in;
And that one of Solomon's wives, a daughter
Of Tyre, perhaps, had learned to her daughter
In the temple reared, and she esteeming,
In her zeal for God's house, 't was right, smuggled
The art unto the virgins of the temple in,
And it had been kept inviolate thence,
Among the holy weavers there. So Anna
Would dye th' choice fleece, and when she did not spin—
She had her hours for that—the little loom
In waiting stood, or the embroidery frame.
And Joachim, dear sire, knew before the time
Of shearing came, the fleeces Anna would
Put for the mantle of the little daughter by.

Grant us your benediction, glorious saints!
St. Anna, St. Joachim, for us pray!

CHAPTER XII.

HOLY LITTLE TEACHER.

"She openeth her mouth with wisdom."—Canticles.
"Her neighbors shall be brought to thee."—Ibid.

THE little one so grew, while Anna spun
Upon the lawn before her door, now come,
The children from the hamlet up would lead
Her to the hedge, not distant from her mother's eye,
To see an old bird feed her clamorous young,
Or sit with her beneath the trees upon the lawn,
And Mary, littlest teacher, would repeat
The lessons with her mother conned; and some
Of these same damsel-girls never forgot
These lessons in the shades of Nazareth.
Such was Salome, after Zebedee's spouse,
And mother to apostles—Dear little school!
'Twas rather heavenly to be so taught.
Sweet little teacher! not so glorious
As He who'll sit upon the mount, and crowds
Unto Him press, yet infant mother write
It unto Him, whose rich beatitudes
Shall pearl His gospel-page, and sweet voiceful
Of the Christ flow down from Olivet's fair brow,

As coming ages crumbling lapse and go,
Knowing not change—the sweet blessings of God!
Dear coming Christ! Dear mother of the Christ!
Our teacher on the Hill—our teacher on the Mount!
O we would love to have been so learned!
But we know, sure, who teaches us, and 't is
So sweet, or who has taught though yet afar,
Who softly shimmers from her heavenlier hills
All that is sweet in worship or in art
On each poor page. Sweet teacher, teach us more!
And more! Just now we want a crayoning—
One pencil-picturing of Nazareth hill;
A little background of palms—draw the trunks,
Easy, grand, one, two, three; throw the branches
Out gorgeously—we've poor idea of palms
In our cold skies—that magnificent prince
Of the landscape among orient trees.
Paint free—the leaves eight, ten span, and wide,
Lend color without stint—lavish green—burn
In to an emerald tone and give fruit—
Berry-dates, hard, green, starting, growing,
Grown—ready for the mouth—flowers together
On th' same bough, heavy to drop for honeyness—
Buds as jaspers. There, you've trees that will do:
Lay out the sward, short, thick, velvety—
Plant in a rosebush of Sharon—color,

Red, rich, burning—and make the roses smell
Put in a lily—that must be elaborate
But chaste—raise a rude stone seat, or of wood,
Under the trees—unroll a bit of Asian sky over,
And put three little maids under the trees—
One, the little Blessed Virgin girl.
There! there! need we say more? you can see th' rest.
But we so love to look and try: don't you?
Well, try; limn the little maids all, serene.
The two as handmaids to the little queen,
Lovely in look and limb, fair Syrian girls–
Hearkening handmaids to the little queen!
And the little Blessed-Virgin-girl, Queen?
My God! if you can paint a cherub, try;
A Raphael Madonna when a young child;
A littler *Admirabilis* spinner*—
Only a little more of the mystic bud,
The ethereal young girl of the Nazareth hill
Or a face most like that other Young Child
Later with Mary under the Egypt palms.

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* See portrait to *Mater Admirabilis*, published by Kirker. New York, from a painting in the Convent of the Sacred Heart, Manhattanville, New York, from a fresco in the corridor of the Convent of Trinità dei Mondi, in Rome, representing the Most Blessed Virgin, spinning flax within the precincts of the Temple, at the age of fifteen years; and imagine her while yet younger.

Put a parchment old and worn upon her lap,
And let the attentive maids kneel, a little
To the side of her feet, and sketch a wheel
At a guardian distance—simple, plain;
Let the flax be flax on the distaff, shining,
Glossy, soft—and the spinner as Anna
Opens to your soul, peaceful, sweet, serene;
Line the very thread, even in her hand—
And, a patriarchal man, as Abraham, looked
The morning after Isaac was born—
Joachim, coming in at the path, rising
Just the hill, stopping to breathe, or look.

And when she had all of the wise lessons
Of Anna, her mother, and Joachim,
Her father, savored with her own wisdom
Taught, little heads would late bethink the sun
Was lowering in the west, and their mothers
Would fear they were upon the hill so long.
Dear group! It is so sweet, once having come,
To with Mary stay, we are wondering more
They ever thought to go. Then she would rise
And go with them some steps across the sward,
All which was done so sweet that they would kneel,
Each little visitor, and take her hands
To kiss—her cheek it was too modest—her lips

Too holy, they had never thought to touch;
But so would kiss her hands and go.
Angels
To brush the helm of her chaste robe are rapt;
We reach the uttermost fringe, streaming as rays
Of that mantle wide enow for all mankind,
Floating some bright Annunciation morn
From the softened clouds, and are but too happy.
And ye have held the Blessed Virgin's hands,
And ye may come almost any summer's day,
Dear guests of Mary, how we envy ye:
O but to kiss Mary's hands! Let us go
And live, too, at the foot of Nazareth hill.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONTINUED JOYS.

"ST. ANNA, SPRUNG FROM THE BLOOD OF KINGS, PRAY FOR US."

AGAIN there was th' joy t' bathe those precious limbs
And put fresh linens, pressed in rosemary,
And fair blue raiment on her little queen—
Her little hidden gem of David's House.
And tenderly caress and lay in curl
The golden ringlets of that lovely hair,

Which the dear Virgin child would with a kiss
Reward upon her dearest mother's hand.
Oh, if it is, sweet Mary's divinest hand,
From our sin-stained lips withheld, let us kiss
Anna's hand! just where Mary's kiss touched!
Then Anna-mother is privileged to draw
With her chaste lips to that immaculate cheek.
O, Anna's joys are thick as violets
In Spring! and so each blessed day as marked
With a white stone—as God never Himself
Repeats, inexhaustible Creator!—
Came bearing its new joy, and Joachim, careful
To contribute to such store, seemed happiest,
Bringing some large berries in his broad palm
To his little girl, or some o'er bright flower
Of the field, or pretty nest. "Nature's baubles!"
God's baubles! and which poets with Joachim
Do not despise, the hand that fashioneth
So they see. And Mary would reward with smile.

"She will reward thee with a smile,
Thou knowest what it's worth."

"THE BAROMETER-FLOWER."—THE LITTLE ROSE OF JERICHO.*

Or Joachim returning from the fields bringing something in his hands.

JOACHIM.

Just hither, little daughter! just hither and see
A curious little thing I have found in the field,
Withered and brown and curled.
Bear a basin of water, Mother-Anna, to me:
Drop in little brown ball, and hasten to yield
The gem of a rose unfurled.

But first let us see how without root, how without stem,
Came ever this strange little rose to grow?
It is certain it drew not from earth
Its food. 'T is only, dear daughter, the wind's little diadem,
Driven and tossed, wherever and when, as the winds may blow,
Blown anywhere over the turf.

* This singular little rose-plant grows at first attached to the earth by so slight a cord or single root, that it is soon detached by the rough winds of the desert. Instead, however, of perishing, whenever a storm or as soon as the rainy period approaches, it commences to unfold its little white blossoms, and thus has won the title of the barometer-flower. As soon as the season of rain has past it again resumes its flowerless, rootless aspect, driven over the waste as a puff-ball in the wind, from which appearance it has been frequently mistaken by travellers, and is fabled as growing without any roots.

A very detached little thing, you see;
Only a dusty and crumpled and wind-tossed ball;
But cast to the basin, in.
See the beautiful flower that peeps out to thee!
Who would have dreamed without any beauty at all,
What could be hidden within?
'T is just like a saint, continued the sire—
As she smiling bent over the water—
So may a soul her virtues inclose,
As detached from the earth, as hidden retire;
And to each the storms are as dews, dear daughter,
That only brings out the rose.

CHAPTER XIV.

BY THE WELL OF NAZARETH.

"ST. ANNA, MOTHER-IN-LAW OF JOSEPH, PRAY FOR US."

SCENE—*A way-faring man from Galilee, stopping by the well in the hamlet of Nazareth. The thatch of the cottage of* JOACHIM *upon the hillside over above the hamlet discerned from the well—a little girl coming to draw water—letting down her pitcher to give drink unto the thirsty traveller.*

TRAVELLER.

BLESS thee, little damsel, whose daughter
Art thou?

Damsel.

Miriam, the daughter of Rebekah,
That she bore unto Nathaniel: Simon,
My brother, nets the fish; I bear the water.

Traveller.

Miriam! there are many Miriams now.
Beautiful name! She who wears it should beam
In her house as a star. But who cometh,
Miriam, now, in the path from the hills?

Miriam.

(Gazing upon our little party from the cottage above, as they emerged from a winding in the path that had hidden them for the moment from our view.)

Joachim and Anna, I think, blameless
And guileless in their lives, and one who beams
In their house as a star—The child God hath
In their old age given unto them. There are sheep
And bullocks for sacrifice in the rear.
They are carrying her up this morn, I'm sure.
She is to be, sir, in the temple reared;
Yesterday the priests were there and marvelled
At the sweetness and wisdom of words
In one so young. Never virgin has been,
They say, received to the temple so young.

TRAVELLER.

As David and Jonathan, our fathers
Were kinsmen!

(*Going forward with greeting.*)

JOACHIM.

(*Lifting his eyes as the traveller approaches.*)

Joseph, my brother! "Let the name of God
Be praised!"

JOSEPH.

The Lord journey with thee and bless
Thee!

ALL.

Amen!

JOACHIM.

Anna, our spouse, my brother,
And the child God hath in our old age lent
To dilect our hearts.
[And Joseph salutes
Without raising his eyes, for sudden he felt
A holiness come into his heart and cast
His eyes down.]

Joachim.

We go up to the temple
Bearing our daughter unto the altars
Of the Lord our God. But whither our way?

Joseph.

A house for Nathaniel to build—I had a gate
For Herod to frame, and am but down
From Jerusalem, magnificent city!

Joachim.

Our coming, a day, would thou hadst tarried.

Joseph.

'T is certain I have missed. But I will pray
For you and your sacrifice. Nathaniel
Waits. The Lord before thee go!

Joachim.

The Lord tarry
With thee.

So parted these friends and kinsmen:
Our three journeying on—Joachim saying

To Anna, Behold a meditating man,
And Anna making reply, He remindeth
Of Adam before the fall, just man! or, said
Her spouse, of Enoch more, and who was not,
For God took him. And Joseph, looking
After Joachim as he journeyed on, said,
As Abraham; in his seed shall the earth
Be blessed. Thank God for meeting thee, it does
One good of a just man to catch but a glimpse,
Our eyes are refreshed. But why went not
I, with them unto the temple back?—why?

CHAPTER XV.

FROM NAZARETH TO JERUSALEM.

——— ——— ——— September rolled
Down all the vine-clad Syrian slopes
Her breadths of purple and of gold,
And birds sang loud from olive-tops.

The respirations of the year
At least grew soft, o'er valleys wide,
Pine-roughened crags again shone clear;
And the great temple far descried.

To watchers, watching long in vain,
To patriots gray in bondage nursed,
Flashed back their hope—"The second Fane
In glory shall surpass the first."—DE VERE.

JOACHIM.

WHAT a beautiful journey, little daughter, we take,
Now by the mouth of the Geneseret Lake.

Anna.

Going up to the temple, House of our God,
Sweet is the path by sacrifice trod.

Mary.

For one day in thy courts, forsaken and alone,
Is sweeter than a thousand elsewhere known.

With the vow on their brows, with the vow on their lips,
Ready to fall, how beautiful among the mountains their steps.
Peace and praise in their hearts—O, a pearl was each word
That the angel stooped nearer to hark and bore up as heard!
And never a new line of landscape, one looming elysian,
In that land of the Judean mountains, arose on their vision,
But they praised as they passed the God who built up the mountain,
And planted the cedar and fir, and sent the cool flowing fountain
Down from its brows, over-capped with the snow,
Crowning with white, as nearer heaven, the verdures below;
And never a field grew over-luxurious, or never a tree
Thrust out with its branches uncommonly fair, but our travellers see;

Never a boulder in its mossings unusually picturing the wood
or the way,
Unworshipped by eyes sweetly observant, is passed, unmir-
rored in heart this day.
Only on the days of the Virgin seen, or then sweetest
seen—
Perhaps the reflect thereon of her soul's sacred sheen—
A glory lines with the mountains and parallels every line,
Or curve on the sky, soft and distinct, a spiritual shine
Lines with the features or face of the mountains on the breast
of the sky,
Lines the leaves of the wood—on every leaf does the lining
silver-most lie—
Lines the limbs of the kings of the wood,
The kings that a century have stood,
The rough nopal and cedar,
Sycamore and juniper—
Holily luminous to see,
Silvering the rinds of the tree—
The black fir, and oak, gleaming as a white birch in the sun —
A white birch with the leaves of the silver aspen on ;
Coating the masses,
Sheathing the grasses,
Touching the waters in warble—the bright fountain run—
All things twice shining, yet shining so soft in the face of
the sun.

What a precious journey, under and over, and between each hill:
Not a breath of hot air heats, not a breath of the damp airs chill.
'Tis an autumn in Syria, a Judean September day.
Three hearts may never forget this luminous way.
How privileged my soul, to journey with Mary and Joachim and Anna,
With this atmosphere over around as a spiritual banner.
And Mary remembers this dear day in Heaven—in Heaven to-day,
From Nazareth hill to Sion's gates, remembers well the pleasant way.
O days! dear days! when young hearts to God's House go up in sacrifice
After the Virgin, ye are days to smile for them in Paradise.
"And virgins after her shall go," and all that walk these paths elect,
I make no doubt, shall Mary's sovereign love protect.
O day! a branch upon their tree beside the living waters,
That waiting beams and waves for all these virgin daughters.
How beautiful to have such branch sent up—unto your life-tree given,
To wait your coming feet, to mark a feast-day, hence in Heaven—

The day when you so harked your angel's special call,
And so chose Heaven in place of Earth, God as the only all,
Whom God did in His sweetness so select
To come up to the chambers for His first elect.
All ye who have, or wait to count so glad a day,
Look on dear Mary in her consecration way.
Look on dear Mary but a child going so joyful up
To take and bless forevermore the virginal pure cup.
Or ye who have given dearest daughter yet, or son,
To after her chaste footsteps hasten eager on,
For every thorn in its sweet solitary way,
Behold a thousand heavenly roses gay,
That yield such perfume for each precious wound,
It oftener seems that only joy is in this pathway found.

(*Drawing nigh to Jerusalem.*)

ANNA.

O sweet is the path of sacrifice trod,
Going up to the temple, House of our God.

JOACHIM.

"I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: We shall go into the House of the Lord."

(*Entering within the gates.*)

"Our feet were standing in thy courts, O Jerusalem. Let peace be in thy strength and abundance in thy towers."

"Go ye into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with hymns; give glory unto Him."

CHAPTER XVI.

IMMACULATE PRESENTATION.

Sancta virgo virginum, ora pro nobis.

"AFTER HER SHALL VIRGINS BE BROUGHT UNTO THE KING."

AND Anna covered herself with a veil
Before they entered the city,
And she covered the child she had brought the Lord.
And first they went, saith the chronicler,
To an inn for travellers, and then Joachim
Went up to the Temple, and Anna, robing
Her child for the offering, took the garment—
Strange to narrate, but unsoiled and more fragrant
Than when she had clothed her—from off the child,
And put on raiment of that soft summer hue
Of the skies of Palestine.—The child had
A delicate beauty; pale golden hair,

Slightly curling—we know as erst one word
For it, *heavenly*—the first veil God gives
To His virgins—which His ancient virgins
Were jealous to keep. This heavenly veil
Of her heavenly hair, pale shining as amber,
Fell down in its wave over her neck,
For which Elisabeth, coming straightway
Down from the temple, brought a necklace
Of lilies—so was Anna's offering
Made ready, by Elisabeth and Anna—
And Joachim returned—three little maids
Bearing tapers—they go toward the temple;
The virginal torch-bearers, in white,
Embroidered with gold, leading on before—
Mary, in raiment the color of the sky,
Anna and Joachim between, following next;
And Elisabeth by the side of Anna,
And others of the tribe of Judah, to whom
Joachim had as wont his messenger sent
As he entered the gates, walking after;
Glorious procession! where are the angels?
Ask a little eye-ointment of John—
Of his angel of the Church, for your eyes,
Such as he counsels to buy, and look up.
There is a gleam of invisible torches
Over above, preceding the way, a gleam

Or shadow of wings as of light in the air.
And when they had come up to the mountain
Of worship—Moriah—appeared at the gate,
And stood at the foot of the stairs renowned,
Marble and massive and goldened—white steps leading
Up to the altar—fifteen—corresponding
To the psalmody of the king—and the priests
Were accustomed to ascend them pausing
To sing on the sacred step of each stair,
On the days of their feasts—the three virgins
Bearing tapers, paused at the foot of these stairs,
And Anna, and Elisabeth, and Joachim,
And all of the people paused with them,
And a cloud of brightness, extraordinary,
Lowered at this same time over the temple;
And the vast marbles, roofed over with gold,
Loomed up as a palace or temple in Heaven,
Suddenly unveiled in the clouds unto faith,
The priests transfigured, standing in white robes,
At the entrance—Zachary and his priesthood,
At the apex of the fifteen broad steps,
Standing above. And the fifteen steps gleamed
As marbles smote with innumerable suns,
And the brow of Anna grew brighter,
And the brow of Joachim, and the brow
Of Elisabeth, and the brow of all;

But the youthful Mary, no longer a child,
As an angel or cherub, letting go
From the hands of her father and her mother,
Gazing wonderingly on her—mounting
With eagerness, peaceful, swiftly, spiritual,
Unaided, alone—went straight up the staircase;
Pausing not, looking not back, till she stood
In her sweetness, and brightness, and rapture,
And triumph, on the topmost stair—waiting
For the priests of her God to receive, to usher
Her, welcome her in—magnificent child!
Th' priests of th' house of thy God were astonished—
Marvelled, seeing thee thus by the spirit come—
Thy parents who had known thee, given especial
Of God, were astonished as seeing thee thus
By the spirit go, and all the people
Who looked up from below were astonished,
And the virgins who looked out from the temple
Within, all marvelled, and the priests received
Thee with benediction, and all having come
To the court of offering in—from a porch
Or vestibule—young virgins having met
Her—seven virginal companions, the almahs,
Anna strewing spikenard, Rachel lilies,
Abigail and Judith bearing tapers,
And Sarah brought a ring, Rebekah

A veil—it was brown, and Esther a crown—
Lily-buds for delicateness as the brow
They would bind, and as she was of the race
Of Judah, the rose of Sharon entwined;
And last came Susannah with a key,
Conducted by Anna, the matron of virgins.
And there are brows unreckoned, seraph
And cherub-like faces peering down,
Over above in the arches stooping toward,
Grouped over the altar where stands the High-Priest
And his Levites, far above, beckoning
Her up with their worshipful eyes dropped down
To the altar. And she goes in her ardent
And serene peacefulness, with her parents
Leading her up to God. Beautiful ceremonial!
Mystic and hidden, only I hear Anna
And Joachim making a vow, words hidden
For Heaven. Could we but know! well, God gives
Some things, but more things for Paradise keeps.
Praised be the God of secrets and reservations!
Religion is sweetest so. There will be mysteries,
O, so alluring! in Heaven to learn,
The glimpse of whose brows we caught on the earth,
But could not so familiarize their faces,
Or read their for-Heaven-sealed secrets here.
They will meet us as half-known and waited

For friends there, with unimagined surprises
Prepared for the elect. O, the glory-guerdons
Of Heaven! but we lose the rite as vision,
Half-unrolled and escaping—only I hear
Anna and Joachim making their vow—
The priest writing it down on a parchment—
A simply grand inaugurative prayer,
A vow for parents who shall after come,
Bringing their virgins nobly up to God.
Mary as she prays or says secret her vow,
Her spouse, the Third with the Holy, whispers,
"Say *evermore*, my dove," and Mary saith
"*Evermore, Lord!*" Thus was her virginity vowed,
And the priest clipped seven of the ambrosial curls
That hung round her brow and her neck as a veil,
And cast them into the brazier for burning,
And as flowers their odors filled the temple.
Then the priest placed the brown veil Rebekah
Brought on her head, and Esther laid the crown
Thereon she held, and Sarah placed the ring
On her finger. And the veil grew shining
Meantime it was seen, but before the altar,
All marvelled but spoke not, or all marvelled
But Anna and Joachim, saying in their hearts,
Over hair so heavenly and fragrant,
Over a brow, over a heart so pure

Beneath, where is the wonder?—She is crowned
By the virgins in the old temple of Sion,
Last and most magnificent child of the Old Law.
And the virgins of the temple enhance
The ceremonial by their harmonies,
Psaltry and harp never so melted together.
And do not the angels watching over
Drop in, now and then, a note in their joy?
Zachary, priest of the sacrifice, standing,
By his altar, two Levites assisting,
Heareth, we think, and Anna, matron-widow,
Mother of the virgins, accompanying,
And an old man in the distance, hears chords
Drop, drop, ever anon in. The Holy Ghost
Touches his ears, dear, glorious old Simeon.
Nunc Dimittis being prepared to sing,
O the preparations that come from the Lord!
And there is another reverent man
With face like a father in Paradise,
Hearing the notes of the angels, dear Joseph!
Whether he came up in vision, leaving
Nathaniel's house, forgotten or no,
We have neither tradition nor clue,
Only we see him, or dream, our Joseph!
At the consecration of Joachim's child,
Breathing as unwitting such virginal pureness,

Pure Lord, be it perpetual! And did
Anna and Joachim, our dearest parents,
Hear harmonies, too, introduced and dropped in
By the angels—angelic accompaniments?
Could their sacrifice-sanctified ears not hear?
And Mary? O Mary! we cannot ask!
Look in her face as a lily and star,
Standing in her young virginal whiteness
At the altar, Mary the young illuminator!
One white offering from earth, white in the eyes
Of God—in the eyes of Triune purity,
Unbreathed on—untouched—one virgin for God.
And, perchance, her eyes, too, see their faces
Over above, from arches stooping down—
Out of the depths of a heart transparent,
Mary making thy vow, th' angels observant
Singing so ardent, are mute, ignorant,
It is true, of this mystery folded,
Still considering this child as a casket,
For Heaven full of jewels, over-bent
Are admiringly mute, considering—
And torches lit from heavenly fires enlighten;
Virgin propitiatory! the Word will soon take up
His abode with thee—Immaculate Sanctuary!
"Doth not the lamp, even now, the Holy
Of Holies before, scintillations shed

Forth in the shade" before her coming—
Her feet in His court, her knees on the steps
Of His altar—who bringeth the Messiah?
Messiah! the word shines by the side of Mary;
They look like an accomplishment together—
Mary and Messiah—only "the first
Shall be last," and the psaltry rings, and the harp;
And the entire temple exults for joy.

Each virgin companion having first embraced
The dear little Mary and called her my sister,
Then came the almahs in triumph to lead
The lovely elect up to their chambers.
Susannah, the eldest, just fifteen that day,
And who was going out to be espoused,
And whose place Mary was now to take, brought
The key of her cell and placed in her hands,
Whereupon knelt Mary, low and sweetly,
Begging her blessing. O humility!
This Susannah, tradition remembers
As one of the women who followed our Lord
In His path in His dolor, and who stood
With the daughters of Jerusalem and wept.
Glorious woman! and she, Susannah,
Touched by the fervors of her successor,
Asked of Mary when she might come to go

Up to her chamber to remember her there.
Susannah was tall and comely to look
Upon, and the virgins were sad at the parting,
But when they looked in the face of Mary
They rejoiced. Anna, the matron, likewise
Received her with kindness, and took the raiment
Anna had brought for the child, and spake
To the mother with sweetness, and the virgins
Waited to lead her up to their chambers.

Parents of Mary, we could weep for ye now;
Their hour it has come; and Mary approached
And knelt for their blessing, and Joachim blessed
His daughter, and Anna held back, in her love
For the child, her tears; she must not pain
The tender heart of the child on the day
Of her spousals with heaven. Thoughtful Anna
Kept back the sorrow till to the chambers,
Over the threshold her darling was passing,
That lead to the cloisters of Israel, sacred
And grand. Ah, Anna! poor human mother,
What aileth thee now? weeping at the altar
Many tears—and Joachim—'t was pitiful,
Too, to see. No, no, their tears do them good,
And it is best to suffer somewhat for God;
Yet they could not but weep much as they turned,

And journey again to the hill. Though they go
Not in darkness, our accepted with God.

CHAPTER XVII.

MARY AND HER COMPANIONS.

"HOW LOVELY ARE THY TABERNACLES."—PSALM lxxxiii.

SCENE—*Going up a superb staircase—entering the magnificent chambers.*

SEE those beautiful temple-girls leading
Their prize through those magnificent rooms,
Watching the joy she affects not to hide,
Innocent joy! innocently looked for;
More than innocently given, modest,
Nor less; we but affect what we have not.
With an innocent joy shining and diffused
Over all her modest, dear face—dear Mary!
She gazed on the grandeurs around her—"dazed
As a child?" Not so; but as one taking
The spirit, with its figures and symbols
In. It was a house full of signs, altars,
Rituals, and vestments—and she read them,
Temple-adornings, mystical, waiting,
Treasures of embroidery, gorgeous pavilions,

Floors of juniper, the figure of the palm
Engraven in gold thereon, wainscotings
And walls of incorruptible wood, inwreathed
With pomegranate foliage, lily-work,
Grapeage of gold, roses half-blown in marble,
Brilliant mosaic clusterings of jewels,
And the glow and promise of God over all.
It was the House of her God, and it made
Her glad to see, and she hid not her gladness.
Holy as modest, and modest as holy, why should
She? and the virgins were gay with her joy;
All day rang the harp, and there was sweet mirth
In th' golden chambers of th' daughters of Sion.

Now they wind up another staircase superb,
And come to a balcony overlooking
Jerusalem, beautiful city! below,—the face
Of Mary, as the face of the moon at its full,
Gazing down on its multitudinous streets,—
Jew and Egyptian, all the East represent there;
Moving and shifting, changing, yet scarce,
One gay panorama, ever on-pressing—
On in the sunshine—and a surge of the West.
Roman and Greek, and a few barbarics,
Sprinkling with quaintness the mass of the Hebrew—
Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, high priests,

Chief priests, known by their garments, prophets
From Carmel, and now a grim eunuch,
Centurions, and publicans, and soldiers,
Shepherds from the hill-country, driving a flock
For the altars, camels, a picturesque traveller,
Picturesquely perched high upon their high backs,
Noble and ignoble asses, bearing,
The one veiled women and beautiful children,
The others, poor drudges of burden, lumber
And stone, and the restive war-horse, bitted
And curved by the tribune. Ah! there's a man
And a woman going down to the gates,
And a white ass bridled without a rider,
That rivets her eyes. Now the twain, nearing
The gates, stand looking back. The riderless ass
Turning his head toward the city, and loath
To go back, even unto fat pastures,
Without her. Doth the old man discern? we've said
God never off-shut by distance or blindness
The face of his child. The face of the crowd
Between eclipsed, he saw not, dear old man!
Nor the virgins as bees clustered round a flower
In the alcove with Mary, only his child,
Holding her dear hands serenely up to heaven,
Yet looking so sweetly to him, and knelt
For a blessing from the gates. See, Anna!

He said, in a tremulous gladness, and stood
More tall, giving his blessing, then as in haste
Passed out at the gates.
It is not good to see
Our friends clear gone, said Rebekah, and took
Her by the hand to lead away; my nurse
Used to say we nevermore may kiss the friend
Whom we watch from our sight.
Hush! hush! answered
Sarah, I have always watched from this nook
My parents go out at that self-same gate;
Mary will see her mother next year or before.
Let us to the yards of Solomon now;—
So they called the gardens or courts of the cloisters,
Inlaid with fountains and trees and flowers.
To the sanctuary door, said Esther,
Then to the orange-trees! To the blessed door!
Said Mary; so they lead her in reverence up
To kneel where even they, nor nearer might come,
To this *sanctum*, trod only by the foot
Of the priesthood and Levite. Through and beyond,
It was the Holy of Holies. You can see
From where the almahs are kneeling, the curtains.
They lead her to the door of the sanctuary
To adore, and knelt. Silently arose
Her companions; and when the Virgin rose not,

Leaving Mary, O blissful remaining!
One by one softly drew off to a porch
Together to talk of her beauty—Flower
Of two tribes, the royal and sacerdotal,
Beautiful girls! her virginal companions,
Beautiful as the ancestral mothers, ye figure,
Types gathered round Mary, in whom, daughter
Of the Law and mother of the Gospel,
The women of the two Testaments meet
And embrace. Sarah, the eldest, now Susannah
Has gone, tall and princess-like as the wife
Of Abraham, of whom it is written,
"And Sarah was fair to look upon," and he feared
For his life when Pharaoh looked on the brow
Of his spouse who swerved not to offer his son.
Another, her ancestral prototype,
There's her picture left twice on the book of God:
A king indignant, or God's anointed,
Out-driven and hunted as prey, having sent
For his followers, faithful and starving, down
Unto sheep-shearing Nabal for pittance
Of bread, refused and derided, arisen
In his wrath, hasting down with his spears—sprang
From a cleft in the rough hills of Judah,
Terrible in armor, magnificent
To look upon, here opens our picture—

Sprang fierce down th' gorge, stayed and surprised, ready
To strike, leaned on his spear, Abigail at his feet,
The wife of the churl in her robes of banquet,
Beautiful Abigail! On her brow, uplift
In its beauty to the king, faith in wisdom
And mercy and David. It is the morning,
The sun, the cliff above them, just rises,
A peak where they had stood overshadowed,
Falling all over the armor of David,
On the cheek of his suppliant, in her hair—
Her eye has no need of the sun. Handmaids
In paleness, and servants behind her prostrate;
A little lower down asses laden for feasting.
Open again with the holy leaves:
The steward of Abraham, his servants
And camels in the rear, and Rebekah
Letting down her pitcher, he seeing she is fair:
Again, it is the shepherdess, Rachel—
Young Jacob a morning after he had seen
His ladder with angels watering the flock
Of his cousin. Esther, and none was found
Like her in Persia—Judith, Holofernes looked
In her face, drunken more with than th' wassail,
So lost his head, and Anna, the youngest
Recollects of the mother of Samuel and Mary's.

SARAH.

Yet her tunic is simpler than ours, Esther.

ESTHER.

But sweeter.

SARAH.

For brightness as well as for color.

ESTHER.

Or for purity, Sarah.

SARAH.

I am so glad
She has come!

ANNA.

There's over it a shine so soft.

ESTHER.

There is a shine so pure over all her raiment,
Never seen on other garments. I am
So glad she has come!

ABIGAIL.

What is the sweetest thing
About her, Sarah?

SARAH.

Well—it is her eyes.

ABIGAIL.

Nay, it is her hair; saw we ever such hair?

SARAH.

Saw we ever such eyes?

ABIGAIL.

But it 's her hair!
Like the purest amber, the sun at the set,
Looking through! God has given her the locks
Of an angel. Let His name be praised! The Lord
Loveth the daughters of Judah and giveth
Them beauty. I am so glad she has come!

SARAH.

Is her hair—is her eyes, Rebekah, her charm?

REBEKAH.

Or her whole face chiselled in delicateness,
Sarah? Brow so fair, cheek as transparent,
Or a neck pure as ivory and more?

RACHEL.

I think her mouth—the red rose-bud of Persia
In sereneness. She smiles an orient ruby:
'T is her lips are the flower of her sweetness,
Just two pomegranate leaves blown in Solomon's garden!
O, I'm so glad she has come!

JUDITH.

Ah, but the charm
Lies deeper. It is her voice, as music
We have dreamed of. 'T is melancholy t' worship
All sweet sounds that come from without, to sigh
With th' winds in the reeds, to groan with the moan
In the waters—O, to hear the airs in the pines,
Where I was born, dear mountains of Judah!
After hearing a mother sing over your cradle,
After hearing the golden trumpets blow
For the feast, after hearing the virgins,
Your sisters in choir, to stand but dumb, no music
Alone in your tongue! What's beauty or birth,
What with, to sing? O, to sing in your heart
And not in your lips! My mother would say
In th' Life Everlasting, we may all hope
To sing. It is my first desire to be there.
I dreamed last night that I stood in a field,
An open field, I think, all around green,
Beautiful! bright! An angel appeared in the air.

REBEKAH.

And you were not afraid?

JUDITH.

Afraid! I was
Gladdened; I looked up—I think that I stood

A little above the ground—and I asked
Of the angel to sing; and the angel said, Sing.
Then I rose up as on wings with the angel,
And I could sing as an angel. O I had
Never, even in my passion for singing,
Conceived in my heart how an angel does sing!
It hath not unto our imagination
As yet entered first, what sweetness is shut
Off for the Hereafter. I awakened to long
For its shore or its portals.

SARAH.

Messiah,—
But He must first come to open the door.

JUDITH.

May He come soon then!
[And all the beautiful girls
Said amen. Each one had a beautiful hope
Laid up in her breast.]

JUDITH.

Each word from her lips
Is a pearl note in tune with a harmony
Our ears are too dull for, that is the spell.
O, I'm so glad she has come!

RACHEL.

But, Judith,
Such a lovely mouth! O it is that makes
Every word as music you dreamed of.

JUDITH.

Does the wing or the song most make the bird?
What lovelyizes the bee over the lime?

ANNA.

Not the hum but the honey, I answer there,
And the bee drones in stillness taking it in.
Speaking of Mary, New little sister,
I will be your little one, she said,
Receive me to serve you. Scarce more her words,
And so few, call the charm of our sister
Her peacefulness rather.

ESTHER.

Or appropriateness!
Recollect we th' fifteen steps she came up?
How she shone at the altar, as she walked
With us through these chambers, but now, how dropped
At sight of that curtain; and yet she is there.
(*Lifting a drapery softly looking in through the hall.*)

JUDITH.

O, leave her alone yet! I remember
How I yearned to adore first alone. Prayer
Is freest alone.

RACHEL.

Let us to the fountains
For flowers while she prays. No work for to-day!
No threading of needles, no casting of shuttles!
With harp and with tambour, away to the yards
Of our freedom!
The virgins rejoicingly gone,
Our Mary, dear Mary, before the veiled place
As the spotless angel of the portals
Guarding the chambers of Jehovah, alone.
She came, and she said only "*My God!*" and bowed
To the floor, beautiful worshipper! now raised
In her adoring and gazing so fixed.
"What is it this most admirable child sees?"
Are her eyes so fixed on the mystery of the veil,
Shrouding the ark, or is she ravished to vision?
Only a veil between, beautiful worshipper!

Sacred temple, cast the veil that hides aside
To this living veil embrace!

Veil to cover, veil to show, veil to veil
And to unveil Messiah's Face.

Veil whose earthly substance spotless, unconsumed
Shall round the Eternal shine,
Envelope in its tender folds, and intact
Hold the fires of the Divine.

Receive this Candlestick the Holy Ghost
With purest gold relays,
Upon whose branches fair He sets his lights,
His seven stars to upraise.

Receive this Table where the cup of wisdom pours
The sweetest wine e'er shed;
This precious Table where the Lord designs
His Bread of Life to spread.

Receive this Altar of perfumes, O veilèd courts;
This holy Ark within whose breast
Thy great Lawgiver, and Jehovah's equal Son,
Himself shall stoop to rest.

This throne of glory and this chariot swift,
Messiah's banner from unfurled,
Upon which, glorious to behold, the King shall make
His entry to the world.

Receive, O Temple, to thy Holies, this new spouse
Of beauty incomparable,
This Temple indestructible, this Sion sanctified,
This Tabernacle admirable.

How long wilt thou, O temple grand, t' shadows cling,
And glory in the letter dead?
Behold the rays of grace that now enlighten thee
From this sweet suppliant shed.

Haste, temple, thy Redeemer hastes, His feet
Are at thy closèd gates,
His voice is in thy porticoes, arouse!
His harbinger here waits.

She whom Isaiah long foretells hath come,
Your veils to her renounce
Who bears the sweet accomplishment
The oracles divine announce.

"*Glory of prophets, immaculate,*"

"*Joy of those who hope in thee, immaculate,*"

"*Companion of devout souls, immaculate, pray for us!*"

CHAPTER XVIII.

NAZARETH WITHOUT MARY.

"SAINT ANNA, MIRROR OF COMPASSION, PRAY FOR US."

JOACHIM and ANNA leaving the gates and onward.

AND Joachim wept even more than Anna,
Saying to his spouse, leaving the gates,
Turning back toward his home, "alack, nevermore."
Child of our old age! Star of our heart, alack!
Smiling in the lone old cot on the hill,
Looking out into the fields of our fathers,
I shall see thee no more! He has given
Up from the heart the best child and dearest
Ever surrendered to God, and his heart bleeds free
As his gift. Anna, kind searcher for comfort,
"Not so sad!" "not yet so sad! we may come
Up every year to see how the child grows."
But how lonesome for our dear parents to come
Back to Nazareth without her! lonesome the house
Late so lovely, th' dear old house so barren!

JOACHIM.

Only two of us now in the little house,
Anna. It might almost seem but a dream,
So certain we imagined, or thought it a real,
As though life could wear such a phase of Heaven.

ANNA.

Only the graces of God never leave doubt.
His supernatural is always a real.
Whoever walks where his dear graces fall
May look for them into the well of truth,
At the bottom of their souls, for the well
Keeps their picture—every lineament of the divine.
It is in our souls to recognize God.

JOACHIM.

When He turns His face toward us in graces.
O how in his gift of Mary! Yes, I see
Her distinct, palpable, clear in my soul,
Going up to the Galleries at the first call
Of the trumpets for prayer. Sing *the hymn*, Anna,
Let us worship with her.

[And Anna commenced—

"How amiable thy tabernacles, Lord,"

But broke on th' first stanza down in her tears,
And Joachim knelt—'t was his wont with the sun
Going down—only he more hastened to kneel,
With his hands spread and his face toward Sion.
Hushed, voiceless they pray, but find in their heart
The pillar of prayer, and each 'gainst it leaned
In their weakness, and the pillar failed not.
Pious souls, prayer-illumed, interiorly stayed!
Perhaps the prayers of a little girl they had left
Near the Holies comes back with a blessing.
They had given her to the same good-giving God
To whom they lift up their brows in the twilight.
O Nazareth! O Moriah! we have two places
To stay at now. Which? Anna, Joachim, Mary?

"*Saint Anna, pray for us.*"

"*Holy Mary, Immaculate, pray for us.*"

"*Saint Anna, mirror of patience, pray for us.*"

"*Rule of perfect obedience, Immaculate, pray for us.*"

"*Saint Anna, bulwark of the Church, pray for us.*"

"*Crown of Patriarchs, Immaculate, pray for us.*"

—LITANY OF ST. ANNA AND OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

CHAPTER XIX.

MORIAH WITH MARY.

"Mater Amabilis, ora pro nobis."

SUNSET-SACRIFICE.

"The forums and places of business are closed: crowds are on the streets coming from their places of occupation, or strolling to enjoy the freshness of the evening air beyond the Jaffa, or the Damascus gate. Suddenly seven Levites, standing on an elevated part of the temple above, sound their golden trumpets:—

'And loud in air
Call men to prayer
From the tapering summits of tall minarets.'

"Those who wished to be present at the offering, might be seen wending their way up the ascent to, or through the courts and halls of, the temple. Others were content to turn and adore, as they saw the column of sacrificial smoke ascending, with the white incense around it like a binding of ribbon, until it was flattened into frescoes against the far vault of heaven."—AVE MARIA.*

ALL heads and hearts are bowed as first
Before Jehovah down, Levite and priest.
There is a gallery o'er all uplift:
Behind the screens Moriah's vestals stand,
Seven temple-maids and one, forgetful
Once to sing; a present Deity is felt,

---

* A Magazine for the Blessed Virgin, published at Notre Dame, by Very Rev. E. Sorin, of Ind.

All of the people rapt and worshipful beneath,
Jew, convert, awe-touched Gentile, each in place,
Hushed to the calm that settles after sacrifice;
And then, recollect as one the virgins chant
As erst, standing behind their holy screens,
Only a voice more ethereal, worshipful,
Ran through th' psalm as a stream from Lebanon,—
Only a silver rill, mid silver rills
The silveriest, a new voice, and the people
Looked up, up to the galleries golden, screened,
Up to the over-arching,* uncertain—
Prone down to more homage, people and priest,
And the cloud grew dense over the censers.
"How amiable, O Lord of hosts, Thy courts,"
God, never gone so worshipped in Sion:
Mary present prays with and for Israel.
"One day in thy courts!" Thou hast had one day,
And all the sunsets for eleven years
Thou wilt come to pray for Israel, thy fervor
Mounting as a flame that is steady, thy fervor
Mounting as the flame that increaseth. Pray on!
"O ye heavens, drop down Messiah!"
Said Judith,
To the virgins, companions, in their colloquy,

* The open heavens, or clear and glorious sky, which was the only roof to the court of the people.

After, apart, How she sang! How she sang!
Said Rebekah, Saw ye the tribune look up
From the court? Blessed be grates! Seen and not seen.
Answered Rachel, It is charming! Saw we not
All the people gazing up from below,
All in their wonder? Blessed! responds Judith,
I heard only that angel I saw in my dream,
And she turns and goes out seeking Mary.
There is a half hour yet ere the gates are shut:
A half hour with Mary before we sleep!
Preparatory precious before we drop
Last into the hands of God for the night.
Judith found Mary walking with Anna
Under the orange-trees in the gardens,
And the three walked under the trees till one came
To lead the new Almah-child up to her cell.

CELL OF MARY.

And the galleries of cells was the third tier
In the chambers,* and last, Mary's, most retired,
"The cell of Susannah now departed,"
Nearest and looking down upon the Holy

---

* This chapter descriptive of the cell and visit of Anna is traditional, from visions of Sister Emmirach and others, as also the presentation of Mary in part, and that seven was the number of Mary's companions in the temple, &c.

Of Holies curtained close, over beyond.
Or there was an opening upon one side
Before which tapestry hung, and three steps
Lead up thereto, and from this place one could see
Into the temple and the Sanctuary and the veil
Of the Holies. Sweetest cell! Her heart leaped
Up as she entered and saw it—saw the opening.
This, then, is her room. A stuffed rug extends
By the wall, where Mary will sleep, a lamp
Hangs from the roof,—under the lamp is a stool.
By standing upon the stool Mary can see
To read by the lamp, and proceeding to unroll
A parchment whereon are some prayers given to read,
Purely obedient, dear little perfect one,
Careful for each leaf of praise as in its turn,
Missing naught, attentive, yet gathering fast,
As some priest hereafter making swift haste
In his mass, eager to get nearer God, reads,
Seeing the three stairs and tapestry beyond.

"Who is at the door?" Anna the matron,
Smiling to see the little one upon the stool.
Kind Anna, to God's little unmothered ones,
Had she come to wipe the tears and to tell
Her mother had been a little girl too
In these courts? placing a plate with some berries

On a table near, and a pitcher beside,
The vision she saw at her entrance told
All was well. Mary, never discomposed,
Steps down from the stool. Anna says, simply,
"I think you will like your room." And Mary,
Looking toward th' three stairs, said more with her eyes
Than her lips, 'I like,' knelt to kiss the hand
Of Anna and beg for a blessing on her first night,
So artless, peaceful, fervent, Anna's face said
This time sure the Lord hath sent us a treasure.

ALONE.

O soul when most alone, then least alone!
Who loveth God only a little knows,
O solitudes and God! who knows, needeth
Not to be told. Who knoweth not, still worse
Can only by, be informed. Having prayed
On the topmost of the three steps, covered
With the crimson coverlet, sleep, God's child!

CHAPTER XX.

LOOKING IN AT NAZARETH.

"SAINT ANNA, GRACE OF PATRIARCHS, PRAY FOR US."

WHILE Mary sleeps we might look in at Nazareth.
Talking still of the dear child you have given to God;
Your eyes see her not, yet your hearts see clear,
Your souls see her now sleeping in the arms
Of God, and that is your calm, precious calm!
Ere you turn to your beds there is her couch.
The little stuffed coverlet of blue.
Anna cannot kiss and cover the child
To-night, but the angels can; she is in the House
Of God; better place even than a mother's house.
So she stoops to kiss the coverlet now,
Where she has slept, and turns to her bed. 'Tis best;
They are living for Abraham's Bosom now.

CHAPTER XXI.

MARY AND MIDNIGHT.

"Regina Angelorum, ora pro nobis."

O soul when most alone, then least alone!

IT is midnight now in Sion,
In the tabernacles lovely,
'Neath the coverlets of crimson,
Nested, O, so dovely!

Sleeps our princess from the hills,
Left within these courts this morn,
Wandering in dreaming by the rills,
Mayhap, where she was born.

Seeing Joachim, blessed father! fold the sheep,
Mother Anna, at a window,
Looking out for her: pleasant sleep!
Little arms akimbo,

Little feet over-lapping
Down beneath the sheet,
Gathered up a-napping,
O it is so sweet!

Dearest little feet, so still!
Little arms, nearer to the brain,
Sympathetic with the will,
Knowing not to refrain,

Petrified in dreaming
As they lifted up to Anna
By the window, in that seeming,
Sleeping still in that sweet manner.

O she looks so resting
Who never had looked weary!
In her brilliant nesting,
So peaceful and so cheery!

And the moon through the slitting
In the wall sends no beam
In her brightness half so fitting
As the smiling of her dream.

Let me linger, let me wait,
On the sleeping glory of thy state;
On this first night consecrate,
Watch the couch immaculate.

Not a rustle, not a sound, but a light,
Marvellous and sweet to-night;
Winding up each staircase,
Magnetized toward this fair face,

Winding here—every stair-step
But a pictured staff of worship,
Silent struck, borne along,
Come the Court of Heavenly song,
All the temple stairways, brighter each than Jacob's ladder,
And the dreams of all men now are growing gladder.

What is gleaming on the marbles, on the marbles far below?
Only shadows of white wings
And heavenly things,
Such as harps touched to silence,
Moving upward in celestial reverence,
Touching up the whiteness, or the marble's snow.

Every staircase bright with the sandals
Of ascending angels,
Wondrous night!
Touch our sight!

What is that, that lights the jewels on the walls far a-down?
Leader Raphael's crown
Inclined, with his angels, mute drawing near,—
Gabriel, already here—
Sweeping from the upper coast,
Raphael and his starry host
Stooped to reconnoitre,
How they love to loiter.

And she sleeps in the little cell aloft so calm,
Every gentle breathing to our souls distilling balm
Whom the thought of God inwraps in sleep,
And voluntary guards of angels stray
And stay
Her watch to keep.

As God doth thy sleeping, pure child, only hold,
So nightly teach our hearts in sleep with God to fold;
And in thy Heaven-surrounded slumber thus,
Queen of the angels, dream of us.
Of our wants and of our woes.
Dream of us, our Mystic Rose!

Our own sweet Rose, our own sweet human Dove,
Sleeping within the dear pavilion of His love.
Every flitting night-hour through
Bearing grace to thee as dew,
We are of thy race, all our wants, all our woes,
Recollect with God, immaculate, dear Rose!

CHAPTER XXII.

MORNING AND MARY.

"Mater admirabilis, ora pro nobis."

"Day breaks on temple-roofs and towers:
The city sleeps, the palms are still;
The fairest fur of earth's fair flowers,
Mount Sion's sacred hill."—FABER.

THE star of the morning has arisen;
What a fair little room in the glow
Of the dawning, wainscot and tapestry,
Little cot low down by the wall of crimson,
Scarcely dishevelled, pitcher and bath-bowl antique
In the corner beyond, mirror of steel
Such as princesses used in those days,
And a table. The table was opposite,
And it stood upon the back of doves
Curiously carved, and on the table stood
The plate with some large berries thereon
That Anna had brought in the evening,
And there are the steps waiting for Mary,
And we see the pure child awake first here.
God the last thought out to the sea of sleep

And God first on the shore of the awake.
We poor polluteds return up drenched by dreams
All but the heavenly. We poor imperfects
Come slow back—Ludlow? Burlington? Notre Dame?
Where? where? not so Mary. She opens her eyes—
"She hath doves' eyes, and her cheeks are encrimsoned
With beauty," and a soul sending thanksgiving
Swift as a first thought to th' God of th' morning—
Arises, kneels, gives by her cot another first moment
To God, and then the pure child, Mary, bathes—
She who was always pure, body and soul,
To her no soil of th' earth ever cleaving—
Dresses, puts back her curls of gold in th' net
And puts on the veil that the High Priest
Had given at the altar leisurely swift,
Goes straightway to the precious prayer-place up.
And Anna the almah stood by her door
And waited, and when Mary came from her cell
Kissed her and led her out to the terrace
To see the sun rise over the mountains.
Morning from Moriah, it was magnificent!
Jerusalem, her glory of mountains
As an army with banners in the sun,
Intermediate vales and the city, outline
And detail, stately trees, cedars on Lebanon,
Straw-thatched cottages and shepherds lower down,

Hills, sheep, goats, cattle-spotted pastures,
Deep cool meadows, and down in the city,
Palaces and stalls and low flat covered houses,
The Corinthian gate of brass where Joachim
Had blessed her last night, going out homeward ;
All this sees Mary, all this sees Anna
With Mary. Now Anna had loved this terrace,
But somehow all from it never had looked
Radiant as now. Do n't we know ? Mary
Is beside her, and the heart of Anna
Was knit to Mary. Moreover Mary
Overlooks Tabor, Gethsemane, that mountain
Beyond. Is n't it touching, this young mother
In the freshness and glow of this first morning,
Overlooking Calvary ? She may see not
As yet the tracks where her Divine Son shall walk
In His passion, but it 's our impression,
As that of the Fathers, a future hangs
Over each one of these spots, a something
That threatens her, and she turns with a sigh
Elsewhere to rest the mystical glance
Of her soft troubled eyes.

Beautiful morning !
All prayers gush more free, and the streets leading
Up to Moriah and the porticoes of the temple
Are filled, and the priests marvelled at this, the courts

Filled so early. O come to our temples
In the morning, sweet Mary, at prayers!
O come to our masses! The sun rises
Over the mountains and the trumpets blow
And Anna and Mary go into the choir,
Pausing within the sacred corridors,
Ere they go into the galleries to draw
Their veils closer down.
Together they come
Where the almahs sit in the place of honor*
With heads bowed down in their veils; and Mary
Repeated with them and with all the people
The eighteen prayers of Esdras, and implored
With all Israel that Christ promised
So long, saying with the priests at the altars,

"Let thy name, O God! be praised and glorified in this world, which thou hast created according to thy good pleasure; vouchsafe to establish thy reign, let redemption flourish and Messiah come quickly!"†

* According to a tradition preserved by Basil, St. Cyrel, and others there was "an honorable and distinct place" reserved or assigned for the almahs of the temple, for all feast-days and at the daily morning and evening sacrifice.

† "This prayer is the most ancient of all the Jews have preserved (*Bonanage*, b. vii., ch. 17), and Prideaux affirms it was long in use before the coming of Christ."—*Note to Orsini.* Also "eighteen prayers of Esdras."

And the people in chorus responded "Amen! Amen!" then were sung from Aggeas and Zacharias,

"The Lord unbinds those who are fettered; the Lord enlightens those who are blind.

"The Lord upraises those who are crushed down; the Lord loves those who are just.

"The Lord has care over strangers; He will protect the widow and the orphan, and the ways of sinners He will destroy.

*"The Lord shall reign forever and ever; thy God, O Sion, shall rule the nations."**

CHAPTER XXIII.

ALMAHHOOD.

"Virgo fidelis, ora pro nobis."

SCENE.—*After the prayers,* ANNA *the matron laying before* MARY *a rule.*

ANNA.

THIS rule hath Zachary drawn. All live
By holy precept and symmetry here

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* Leo of Modeno.—Maimonides.

That render them as stars, my child, moving
In their orbits of order and of beauty
As the Creator hath so disposed: read.

(MARY *reads the rule.*)

ANNA.

Can you keep it, dear child?

MARY.

By God's good help.

ANNA.

I will bring you in to the virgins'

MAGNIFICENT WORK-ROOMS.

(MARY *entering with* ANNA.)

The chambers of the virgins,* a gallery
Or hall having its separate roof or awn
In form of a pavilion, by inner porticoes,
Superbly curtained, floor of precious woods,
Polished as ebony, enriched with those leaves
Golden, and carved in the wood. And the room
Had, as each room on its north side, its door
And staircase leading up to the chambers
Over above, which were but a range of cells.

* Mater Admirabilis, pp. 388–404.

Magnificent chamber! on its smooth floor
Of Juniper sit th' simple wheels of th' virgins
Who spin, and the baskets with spools, red, blue,
And purple, all colors dyed in the wool,
Or the shining flax swathing the distaff;
And here in the morning after the prayers
Are the virgins busy as bees at the wheel,
The loom, or the frame where embroidery is made
For the vestings and holy partitions.
There sits Sarah whose name is *my princess*,
In a folding chair at a little hand-loom
For weaving, moving the light shuttle
Across with hand so graceful, fair Sarah!
She is the eldest now of the maids in the temple.
In front of the wainscoting, gracing the walls,
Forming cases for windows opening out
On the country, spinning hemp or flax, sit
Abigail, Rebekah, and Rachel—Esther
And Judith a little apart, at work
With their needles—Anna the little one—
Anna was two years the senior of Mary—
Winding spools. Mary asks to help Anna;
Now they had not thought to give Mary
Tasks while yet so tender, but having come
Up to the industrial chamber, straightway
She seeketh out that which her hands may do,

Setting her seal on industry so young,
And the mistresses, thinking but to please
Her, set her task to wind spools with Anna.
Delighted Anna, was n't she happy t' have
Mary help her? They gave them a basket
Of spools—the color was blue. Her robe and shoes
Were of the same color. Dear little spool-winders!
Did n't they make up a picture that was pretty?
And the two wrought together and silence reigned
In those "grave galleries," every thing recalling
In sweetness and awe the House of the Lord.

GARDENS OF SOLOMON.

And when the evening had come the virgins
Descended from the choir to the gardens.
It was after the sunset, and Anna,
The orphan, walked again with Mary and made
To her a present of half of her flowers—
A bed Eleazer, who had charge of the gardens,
Had given her, where she filled the vases
Assigned for the altar. And Mary tended
The bed with Anna. And when it was seen
The lilies are more delicious she tends,
There was no flower in the garden she might not prune.
And she waters the shrubs at the sunset,

And she plucks off the bud worm-corroded,
Or the leaf rust-defiled, as unworthy
A garden of God. And the pomegranate-trees
Have more fruit where she walks and touches
The scarlet boughs. And " the calamus flourished,"
And the camphor-tree and the cinnamon,
And the rose-beds and th' spice-beds, and all the rare
And beautiful exotics inhaled perfumes
From the Lily of Nazareth come down
To tend them, from the Rose of Anna,
Come down to smile on their buddings and choose
Out the fairest to worship and die at the altar.
And this care was precious to Mary,
And Anna joyed in the joy of Mary.
And Mary often thought of Joachim as she walked
Amid the gardens, fondest of fathers,
He had surrounded her cradle with flowers.
The dear parents on the Hill! Our Anna
We left turning from the couch she had kissed.
And after a time she came to enjoy
The couch kept in waiting and the vases
Or cups from which she had drunk, the hood,
And several little garments she had worn
When a child, preciously preserved. Joachim,
Most of his pastime now was to sit 'neath the palms
On the lawn before the door where Mary,

Little daughter, had loved to sit, and last
Came to sit there most of th' hours through th' day.

Anna, whose tender eye nothing escaped
Of his pensiveness and turnings yet more
From all his flocks and care, said to herself,
His heart is sick for the face of the child.
But one day when a messenger came
To the Hills, he brought a basket of flowers,
And Joachim kissed the flowers and wept
When they came. Every flower he knew whose hand
Had touched it, and he kissed every flower,
And no more was he sad after the present
Of Mary. O the presents of Mary!

CHAPTER XXIV.

FIRST VISIT TO MARY.

"Saint Anna, vessel full of grace, pray for us."

AND the year being gone, Joachim brought
Of willows from the river of Cison,*
Between Nazareth and th' Mountain of Prophets,
And wove a basket for Anna's store.
And the dear parents of Mary journeyed

* A small river between Nazareth and Mount Carmel.

Up to Jerusalem to visit the child;
And Joachim and Anna pass through the gate
Of Rama. Joachim seeing not as erst
The green banner of Judas Maccabas float
From the tower—up through the great city,
Up through the gate of Corinthian brass,
Seeing the beautiful one of the temple,
Standing in a vestibule at the entrance,
Coming to meet them down through the porches.
And Mary knelt for their blessing and kissed
Th' hands of her parents and led them to Zachary,
Walking with Eleazer in the courts;
And Zachary was glad at their coming,
And when it was known th' parents of Mary
Had come there was gladness in all the temple,
For all of the Levites and chief priests knew
Joachim, and held him in honor: thus
Was it the first time and last and ever.

Anna had brought a basket of raiment,
Garments of blue embroidered for Mary,
Slippers and tunics for such of the almahs
As had no mothers, and some gift for all.
Anna's basket held something for Nœmi
Moreover, kind mistress of the almahs,
Good, pious Nœmi, quaint but good. Good

In the eyes of Mary, and that is sweet praise.
And the matrons showed Anna how Mary
Could seam and had commenced to embroider.
Happiest Anna! happiest Joachim!
But their joy was to see the child, to see
Mary, kiss Mary, sit by Mary—and drink
Every word in of that voice penetrating
And sweetly unguent. Beautifully had
She also grown; so tall, so modest, and grave.
To worship God and see Mary was joy
For a year, past and to come; when they go back
To the hillside again they will count the months,
They will count the days between, to go up
And visit Mary; it will grow, the sum
Of their lives, to be, dear saints!

CHAPTER XXV.

IMMACULATE EMBROIDERER.

"Virgo Prudentissima, ora pro nobis."

AND the second year embroidery was given
To Mary and spinning of flax and hemp,
And it was a marvel, all that she did.

No one knotted so neatly and swift the skeins
From the spindle and laid them in such heaps
For the spoolers, yet no haste, only careful,
And never a moment running to waste.
She was set to pick up bits and to keep
The baskets in order, all which she did well,
Order was always a rule with Mary.
'Tis a shame slovenly to do what we do for God,
And all things for Him, are they not done?
Giving herself from her waking, three hours
To prayer, and to th' needle or wheel as appointed,
Running never over, falling not short,
Never was holy rule so holy kept.
And so fair wrought Mary the vestures,
None thought to be jealous, being excelled.
How could one ever be jealous of Mary?
Her work or her worship? Rose of our race!
How can one ever be jealous of Mary?
To be ashamed of in heaven. My God!
Will they ever get there who are jealous of Mary?
Of the rights of His mother? Her honor
Is God's, who may ever be jealous of Mary?
None at least of these seven sisters who stood
At the altar of Sion when she was vowed.
O sweetest companions! here was sweet friendship.
Sisters in cloister love one another;

See how Mary loves each virgin sister,
See each think to love her in turn, or love
Without thinking, which is simplest and best.
And the needle-work of Mary was most praised
Of all ever done in the temple ; and there had been
Aforetime cunning embroiderers, well skilled
In working in the wools, byssus and gold,
Flowers that stood out on th' rich stuffs in beauty ;
But now the adornings were given to Mary,
So grew the flowers under her fingers,
Pomegranate-embroidery, lily and grape-work,
Wheat-heads in silver or gold, and all flowers,
Or vinings as blown out in gardens,
Industrial immaculate embroiderer !

And the fourth year Mary was in the temple
It was pleasing unto the priests she should
From that time commence a veil for the Holy
Of Holies, the glory of which had not been seen,
And they provided them silks from Persia
Of the color of gold, thick for stiffness
And sheen, and pearls sent by Eastern princes,
Emeralds, carbuncles, and all precious stones,
And gave them to Mary, and Mary commenced
The veil. Let us contemplate her seated
Upon a dais somewhat as a throne,

And the maidens her companions with embroideries
Beneath—vestment and tapestry—winding
Their byssus, setting their stitches, angels
Around Mary, frequently hovering—
One threading her needles that grew not empty,
Smoothing the line so byssus never tangled.
Another with reed tracing the pattern
Of altars or tower, symbols, figures, and signs,
Or shading the brilliance so gold never dazzled,
Or touching her hand and it never wearied.
Why should n't th' angels help her, she was their queen?
Murmuring of Paradise, fanning her brow,
Sitting at her feet as she wrought, unseen
By her companions lower down, no doubt,
Yet seen by Mary. And under her hand
Scarlet pomegranates burn into the silk.
There are roses that are rubies, lilies
In pearls, flowers flashing in all precious stones,
And this veil it was so magnificent
It was not finished till the seventh year,
And was a wonder and prized by the priests.

"Sedes Sapientiæ, ora pro nobis."

CHAPTER XXVI.

ADMIRABILIS SPINNER.

"Regina Virginum, ora pro nobis."

BUT spinning the dear olden saints loved most
To picture their Virgin. Princesses, queens,
Clotilda, Margaret, Elizabeth of Hungary,
Royal dames in the more sanctified ages,
Gather their maidens about them and spin,
In love with their model. It is so fair
To see Mary at work as the humblest
Of us—at the work of any simple maid;
And Mary was lovelier more at the wheel.
Earlier in the morning the virgins sat
At their wheels. Mary loved most to be humble
And sat lowest down spinning the vestures,
Meek queen of the virgins. Of this time and toil
There is this admirable old

LEGEND OF THE PURPLE.

Then came beautiful Rachel to the chamber of spinning, one morning,
After or next, I am musing, unto a feast,

Bearing silk, hyacinth, byssus and purple, colors, divers for spinning,
A task to the virgins sent in by the high-priest.

Give Esther the purple, said Sarah, we might any of us take it, but then
It was Esther of old who was sceptred and crowned;
Or, said sly Rebekah, here is Abigail, whose scriptural mother we ken,
The wife of a king better known on Judean ground.

Shall Esther or Abigail take the imperial so grand? we walk in their wake?
I am holder of all, smiles Rachel, you've forgot;
Shall they like the Persian, or David the king, from me be presuming to take
Unless they be favored to win by the lot?

Then Rebekah brought lots, and Sarah as elder, presided in glee,
And they cast for the purple, those beautiful girls,
Seven representative roses, or jewels, those women sweet-pictured in Scripture we see—
A ring, Mary the diamond of virgins, inpearls.

They cast for the colors in mirth, the virgins before their wheels in the hall,
And the purple to spin fell to Mary.

Sweet smiling out each word, said Anna, whom Mary loved,
How could it otherwise fall?
Can the lot of the righteous vary?

Said Rachel, said Abigail, said Esther, said charming
Rebekah, said all, it is good;
And they named her the Queen of Virgins then,
And so sweet their dispositions there seen an angel unveiled
in sereneness by stood,
Descended to say at the words of the virgins, Amen.

"Amen, what you say is not vain. Amen, and your words
shall the accomplishment be."
Of all that the prophets of the Lord they have said,
And he touched their spirits, and they stood round Mary as
stars round th' moon, admiring to see
Their queen by the side of the angel un-afraid.

Meek Queen of the Virgins, spinning the purple,
Admirabilis spinner, so we have said,
The olden saints loved to picture or paint
Their Virgin, and th' love has come down to our day,
Thus one of late, in an admirable new book*
Of Mary, fresh as May-leafage unrolling,

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* *Mater Admirabilis*, pp. 28–29.

Shows his pilgrim coming to visit
His virgin spinner in the temple.

"The pilgrim looks in surprise, and very soon feels as if the air around this fair flower of the field and lily of the valley were embalmed with the perfumes of silence and recollection. He sees her occupied in simply spinning flax; near her, on the right, is a distaff resting upon a slender standard, and on the left a lily rising out of a crystal vase, and bending its flexible stalk toward Mary, raising her eyes to contemplate it more easily, inhales the heavenly dewdrops and virginal perfumes. Absorbed in her meditation, the most holy child has suspended her work; her shuttle, become motionless, falls from her hand, while her left hand still holds a light thread which remained joined to the flax in the distaff; a foot of this most holy spinner rests upon a stool, near which lies an open book, spread out on a work-basket filled with shuttles and skeins.

"The features of the youthful Mary express a purity in which there is nothing of earth; her countenance is modestly tinged; the ringlets of her golden hair are just perceptible through the wavings of a transparent veil which covers her neck; her pure virginal brow, slender figure, and delicate limbs, give her a youthful appearance full of grace and truthfulness. It is truly the Virgin of virgins, it is truly Mary, and Mary at an age when but few works of art have sought to represent her, to excite the veneration and love of the faithful."

"*Mater purissima, Mater castissima, ora pro nobis.*"
"*Mater inviolata, Mater intemerata, ora pro nobis.*"

CHAPTER XXVII.

OTHER PARENTAL VISITS.

"SAINT ANNA, PRAISE OF ALL SAINTS, PRAY FOR US."

AND Joachim and Anna came again to Jerusalem:
And her parents came to visit Mary each year.
"And I was glad when they said, Let us go
Up to the house of the Lord." Dear parents,
So was the heart of Mary rejoiced,
And the almahs were gay for the joy it gave
Their sister, gay for a feast-day given
When Anna came, and gay for the presents—
Such a pretty basket of embroidered mittens!
The young so love new gifts, and from the hand
That is reverenced. It was nice to get gifts
From so gracious a matron, godly, and dear.
None came to the temple so gladdening the almahs,
None brought such presents,—beautiful birds to sing
As sweet prisoners in the chambers of the house
Of the Lord. "And the sparrow hath found a nest
For her young even at thy altars, O Lord
Of hosts," said Joachim, and took a nest
When he would come down, from the eaves
Of the house of Nazareth for the altars,

Dear, pious, David-like, poetic Joachim!
If poesy is not piety, piety is poesy—
A nest of sparrows and many cages of birds
From the hill-country this time and other times
Brought he, and the almahs hung the cages
With nightingales from the gardens of Anna
In the rose-thickets on the terraces
That throve by their casement on the verandas,
And the bulbuls, ravishing singers, a nest
With old birds and young, in the cornel-tree
In the garden, where they would walk at twilight.
And Mary would lead Joachim down to see
The glory of the lilies; and Simeon, a man
Drawn oft to the temple for fasting and prayer,
Sometimes walked with Joachim and Mary
In the gardens; again Eleazer and Anna,
That Anna the orphan and friend of Mary,
Or her mother, Elisabeth and Zachary,
Dear group! would join them, for Elisabeth came
Oft up from Hebron and joined Anna here
In these visits, dear kinswoman so pious!
Then Joachim banqueted with the priests,
And the matron of almahs made a feast
For Anna, and Mary sat at her right hand.
And Mary never fasted in those days lest
The heart of her mother should be saddened:

She kept many fasts other times for God,
But Mary ate at the banquet with Anna,
And it made Anna glad to see Mary eat:
And more and more as the beauty of Mary
Developed, Anna was glad and consoled.
Sweet was the loveliness of her sweet face
To Anna, beautiful every movement,
Gesture, or her repose, beautiful virgin!
But fairer and dearer the fragrancies
Of her soul and her virtues. The matrons
And widows all spoke of her praise to Anna,
And Joachim saw how the aged priests
Whenever she passed murmured a blessing.
And the heart of Anna and Joachim
Were full for sweetness. Happy in coming,
Happy in going to come again. Precious
Be thy going. Let us abide with Mary.
Days of such almahhood filling but too soon.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ALMAH-BRIDES, OR THE EDEN-SACRAMENT.

SARAH was the first betrothed by the priests
Of the temple. And for the betrothal
Of the almahs Anna the matron made

A feast, and the priests gave her wherewith to make
It royal. And if the almah had not parents,
And was an orphan, they likewise made her marriage,
As a father for the daughter born in his house.
Sarah had parents and many kinsfolk,
And was only betrothed in the temple
And led unto the house of her mother
For the nuptials. But Anna, the matron,
Made a feast-day and all of the almahs
Made Sarah presents according to custom.
Mary the youngest, embroidered her bride-shoes,
And the feet that wore them never went wrong,
Pursuing the sweet ways of pleasantness;
And Rebekah, next in age unto Sarah,
Was betrothed the year later. Beautiful bride!
Not so grand-like and stately as Sarah,
But by archery of mouth and of eye more sparkling;
Just a rose newly blown in her bride-robes;
Through her silver veil, handsome Rebekah!
The rich robes only richened round her blushing,
Only shone round her beauty outshone.
Rebekah had no mother, her father
Was abroad, and the priests having the charge,
She was both betrothed and given in marriage
From the altars, and the almahs kept seven days
Her feast; and to Mary there had been given

Pearls and rubies to work in her sandals,
And she wove a crown of flowers and jewels,—
The jewels her father had sent home from Asia—
And the bridegroom of Rebekah was young
And comely as Jacob—her father had chosen,
And he had seen Rebekah when but a child,
And then loved her,—and Mary crowned her bride-brow,
And it was beautiful, for Love and Mary were there.
Abigail and Rachel, who were of the same age
And kinsmaidens or cousins, were betrothed
In one day in the sweet year following—
In their robes of beauty just like two jewels
Dropped into a basket of roses, dear brides!
Two more were betrothed in the eighth or ninth year
Of our dearer Mary's fair almahhood,
Esther and Judith, and Mary wrought their veils
And the High priest blest them. The High priest
Always blessed the bride-veil of an almah.

All of the almahs are gone who welcomed in Mary,
All of the almahs, but one, and she is going,
Yet not by marriage, sweet, pallid Anna.
Sad is it not almost, to see our roses
Even from the altars gathered so? plucked
From the very side of Mary, beloved,
Others chosen to their places, is it not sad?

Yes, unto us, knowing how the mothers
Of Jerusalem are to weep for their slain;
Or glorious perchance, some of these brides
May have been mothers to apostles or disciples,
To some of His seventy, to marytrs or saints,
Blest most in weeping for Him, even as Susannah.
'Tis not irreligious so to contemplate.
And sure after thus living with Mary
They all made precious wives and mothers
In Israel, dear Almahs! Companions of Mary.

CHAPTER XXIX.

LAST OF THE SEVEN.

"Janua cœli, ora pro nobis."

BEHOLD she cometh forth from her chamber
Clothed in blue raiment with a white cincture!
Who meeteth her in the corridors with a kiss?
Who goeth with her up to the galleries
Of praise? who standeth beside her in choir?
Who clings to her side, a shadow of sweetness
And beauty evanescent? Who loveth Mary
More than all, even Judith excelling?

Even Anna the orphan whom Mary loved.
And Mary loved Anna more that she had
No mother and was orphaned, and had
No lot or inheritance in Israel, or home
But the house of her God. She was royal
And holy, this knew the almahs, not more,
And loved her: and Mary loved Anna more
For that dear name of her house. There's a charm
In a name,—some true, catch not any charm,
But one I know, named for Anna, I think,
Of Nazareth Hill,—she is a young woman
Now, but as oft as into her pure face
You may look, there is the lines of the charm
So sweet, you are saying to yourself over,
She was blessed in her naming, so this came.
God keep all the Annas! pure name!
Where the powders are made for the censers,
In the scented laboratory for the incense,
Mary stands weighing with little golden scales,
Helping Anna, the matron, compound spices:
How precious to have Mary help make perfume
For God! Who is she in white linen and scarlet
Standing by Mary? even she always an orphan,
Anna, the almah, companion of Mary,
Haunting you with her eyes—clinging to Mary,
More and more each blessed day—brightening away!

O, how these saint-maids love one another!
She said her vow a little before Mary,
Dear, pale Anna! she will never need unsay.
When the spices are ground in a mortar
And finished, they come through a chamber;
The knives for the sacrifice here are stored,
And the vessels, and Mary is standing near
Unto an urn where the blood is staining—
Blanched is her cheek! What aileth her now,
Weaker even than Anna, looking off in one
Of those mystical trances? Daughter of seers!
Sees she a future where the mystical veil
Opens—a presentiment behind—blood
On the curtain?
They walk on the terrace—
Anna has sunk to rest by the fountains,
Mary smooths back her hair, glossy and jet
As wing of the raven, royal Jewish hair!
Smooths back her hair as any kind mother—
Was she not, even then, her little mother?
Bathes her brow, like the marble for fairness,
Fevered so faintly, just like the marble,
Dear brow! where something as sunset has left
A faint tinge spreading over or through—takes off
The red sandals cooling her feet, disposing
The white tunic and mantle, the mantle

A snow-white fleece with a border or embroidery
Of scarlet, Anna of Nazareth had spun—
And sat at her feet and talked of that rest
In the Bosom of Abraham, our Father,
And her words sank as honey into the soul
Of Anna.

Later.

(Scene.—*Chamber of* Anna *the almah.*)

'Tis a virginal cell—uplift—apart
From the grander temple, yet beautiful
With gold and with Mary and with death.
As a star this night in skies that are misty,
Yet luminous, over th' couch of her drooping flower
Tenderer than erst, she who was ever all tender,
Hangs Mary, dear watcher! renders dying
So sweet, murmurs Anna, as a dove
Might murmur, dying of some painless ail
In its dear nest in the eventide of summer,
"I had never thought dying to be so sweet."
The lamp shedding fragrance on the midnight,
Look on th' picture and learn how to prize Mary:
A sweet cell breathing of purity, wainscot
Of cedar veined slightly with silver or gold,
Meet for virginal bower where all was royal,

And every inmate descendant of priests
And kings—possible mother of the Messiah-King;
The spice-lamp overhead shining down on a couch,
And more than the lamp-glows, soft rays supernal,
Falling over face lovelier than in choir,
Looking into the face of Mary, whispering
Of Paradise. Dear Mary, she even then had,
And never since hath lost, a predilection
For dying beds. This is her first. O, the thousands
She will stand by to help in dying well!
Sweet Virgin, stand by ours! Beautiful chamber!
Mary and a saint and th' invisible attendants;
And death came in as an ambassador, standing
In muffled sandals reverent in the midst
Of the angels around the Queen-girl of angels,
Hanging over the young saint-pillow—Dying,
It can scarce be wrote, it was so heavenly!

It is one o'clock, or two by the candles:*
The lamp shimmers down on the brow of Mary,
On the spiritual brow beneath, almost an angel's,—
Hands folded as petals of two white lilies
Over the crimson coverlet,—breathless Anna,

* The hour of the night being marked by candles, each one of which burned an hour.

Long has she lain stirlessly dying, or praying,
Just as some pure statue for the stillness
And whiteness, but for the eyes, each is a lamp,
The fleshly veils, thinner and thinner burning
Away: Anna lovely in life, Anna lovelier
In death,—Mary knelt by holding one hand,
Pallid and waxen, just the certain line
Purpling the delicate nail, dear drooping fingers!
Mary uplifts them and Anna first smiles,
Looking on her hand in the hand of Mary.

Anna.

The death-line! I am faint with desire!
Abraham's Bosom is a blessed place,
You say. Dear rest! I have a mother there
Who died as I was born. It was so sad!—
The cordial cup, Mary, it is my last,
(Said she, looking, recollect, into the cup.)—
I have somewhat to confide. (Dear Anna,
She could n't die and not open her heart to Mary.)
I believe I grow stronger, well, it is sweet,
This strange new strength coming me to bequeath
The tale of my wrongs and my joys,—Mary to tell!
Leave them with Mary (murmurs confiding),
They have told me of my father, Mary,

I think they thought it not just I should go
Into Limbus and not my father know,—
My father who died before I was born.
You know of the wasting wars of Herod,
You know of the Asmonian line of princes
Who dwelt in the tower* Herod sealed up
With rock so no man can go up or down,
Mariamni, princess-maiden, senior by years
Of Aristobulus, only, noble prince-brother,
Mariamni whom for beauty they tell
As the seven stars among women, Aristobulus,
Lofty, pious, and generous: and the sister
And brother loved one another as last
And but two of a race that was kingly,
But the people, they were sick for the wars
That the Idumean favorite of Cæsar
Waged against the house that was princely,
And when Herod had seen fair Mariamni
And loved her, and Herod had moreover said,
And Aristobulus shall then be your High Priest,

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* "The tower of Antonia might be considered the citadel of the temple: it was of old the palace of the Asmonian princes. The rock on which it was seated was fifty cubits high, inaccessible on all sides. Herod had it, from base to side, covered with marble, so no one could go up or come down."—*Note to* ORSINI'S *Life of the Blessed Virgin.*

And pious Aristobulus knowing he would
So not rob his loins,—it's greater to be a priest
Than a king—and not slow to give Mariamni
A crown, and fair Mariamni not adverse,
So it might give peace in Israel, the priests
And the leaders of the people gave consent,
And Mariamni became king Herod's wife
And they crowned them. But Herod was jealous,
For the people rejoiced more when she was crowned,
Though he hid his wrath, for he loved Mariamni,
And she bore him two sons. Then Aristobulus
Longed for the robes of the Lord, and Herod made
Him High Priest to please Mariamni—and once
A priest, is a priest forever, and the line
Of the priest parts from the sceptre of Judah
To cleave to the altar—but the altar of a priest
Is his throne, nearer Heaven—and Aristobulus
Rejoiced, being made anointed, and he made
A sacrifice magnificent unto the Lord,
And he came out in his robes of holiness
From the Holies and blessed all the people,
And the people shouted, and Herod was wroth,
For the people shouted more for Aristobulus,
And he saw how they loved him; and Herod
Hated the High Priest from that day, and lay
In wait for his blood, and made a banquet

For him and invited none other thereto,
And strangled him alone in the bath, saying,
He 's drowned. And all Israel had such mourning
And such wrath, for he deceived not the people.
The Lord have mercy, and show him his sins
And give him repentance!

MARY.

(*Her face taking a look prophetic.*)

Amen.

ANNA.

I had been told the story when but a child;
Well have the priests his history kept;
But when it came to here, I used to feel
My heart start, and th' blood run hot to my hands
As I clasped them and begged th' Lord to remember
The tyrant. I have been praying to-night
For that to be pardoned. Eleazer, he saith
'Twas the blood of our race rising up and crying
Within me, and just; but since I have looked
In your face I have thought only of mercy,
I have prayed even for Herod to-night,
I'm sure he hath need, for he slew God's High Priest,
I'm sure he hath need, for he slew also his wife,
Beautiful Mariamni, and their two sons, likewise,

And walled up the tower, and said, I have crushed
The last of the blood—I was in the temple.
Aristobulus had taken to wife the daughter
Of Eleazer, the priest, and I am the little one
Of his daughter. She was with her father in his house
When they brought her the tidings—my father,
You know—and she never lifted after her head,
And she died when I was born. The eyes of Herod
Were as vultures, but he found not the child:
And Israel made lamentation at the grave
Of my father—it was long—it was bitter!
The house of Eleazer wept for my mother—
Eleazer only will weep for me. I give
Him and Nœmi—nurse faithful and dear—
I put my two ties and treasures into your hand,
Love them for me.

[Mary answers with a kiss,
And tears stand in the eyes so tender and heavenly.
Courageously held back—she would sustain—
As the sweet dews on the branch of a tree
Overladen at that hour, peacefully drops one:
O Mary's tears! we may love them! worship
Them! kiss them! Anna in dying adored
Them, almost; kissed the one fallen down
To her hand.]

ANNA.

I am the last of a just seed,
O Jehovah! Lord God, only holy!
I should be holier!—Star of my dying-time,
Only pure one in the House of her Lord,
Pray for me ere I sleep with my fathers!

MARY.

(*Soothing her brow.*)

I pray.

ANNA.

And death is but drenched in love!
My pure, young, priestly martyr-father!
I am so glad I was his child, not Herod's;
It is glory enough for my paradise,
To be but his child and kneel at his feet.
Eleazer hath hoped for this poor scion more,
Last born of prince and priest, but never I 've felt
It could be so—I have rather all my life
Been wanting the joy that I knew not till told
The tale of my birth; but I knew it straight then,
It was to look in my dead father's face,
My mother had so left it here in my heart.
That other great hope of Israel and the priests,

Be thine the joy: Be thou, Mary, so crowned;
I would sooner see thee have than myself th' joy.

MARY.

(A grave and beautiful, but very humbled look coming into her dear face.)

Let me kiss the hands of His Mother.

ANNA.

But the stain that lies
On the soul, the stain that we cannot pray off,
Or wash out with tears, whose trace we see
In every human face—albeit, I've not seen
It in thine—will that too, then, be taken?
But that I go with white feet as a spirit
Leaving corrupted dust and ashes may walk
To their fathers, pray, for I've been too slow
In prayers, and never had aught to sacrifice
Unto the Lord my God.

MARY.

Offer your life,
And accept the agony; it will come.

ANNA.

But the offering's so small, drenched only in love—
In love ——

[But Mary saw the unmistakable look.
It was the first time she had looked upon death
In her race; she saw the fruit that Eve bore
And her tears fell fast, pure Eve! But Mary
Is ever recollect.]

MARY.

Would you not look
In the face of your friends?

ANNA.

Thou art my friend,
And I feel no absence. We are not alone.

MARY.

No: (she too saw the angels but the almahs
Would grieve not to kiss the cheek of their sister.

ANNA.

I may see them; yet stay thou, my nearest,
My dearest, next unto God—after God!

First comes Nœmi, dear nurse, with quick wail
Ringing through the corridors, but hushed more

And more, crossing the threshold—none weep loud
Coming in there, the place is too heavenly!
The charm of the world we go to is there.
Tears fall with Mary's but as dew, Eleazer,
Face buried in the rug, hoary beard drenched
As in th' tempest, poor old man, weeps, stifling
His sobs to bless her, and the almahs each came
And kissed the cold cheek of their sister,
And asked for her blessing, and Anna died
Holding the hand of Mary.—May we all die so!
Then Eleazer plucked his white beard, his hope
Was quenched, and Nœmi-nurse and the almahs
Sang the death-song of the Hebrews for a virgin
Gone before her spousals, leaving no seed;—
Such as died, extinguishing in their house the hope
Of the Messiah-King. Mary knelt by the couch
Till the spirit came forth, standing on her knees
As a white rose in a breeze, stilled in a little circle
Of charmed air, the winds beating their wings
In the distance. Dead! dead! Mary had seen
Death never before, but in the sacrifice,
And never th' limb there smoked on the altar
But the shiver had run through her frame—
Standing now on her knees, where are her eyes,
Straight through the lattice-way opened beyond,
Going out to? What cliff the moon just silvering,

And one tree that has no branches but two,
Blanching her tender face? See her pityingly,
Tenderly, all ye who shall see her yet
With the marks of His blood on her garments
And hair, and so pallid now; but, God's will!
God's will adorable! a glance and a look
Upward of triumph, a rendering of thanks,—
Tears mercifully gush to those late streaming eyes,
A radiance irradiating around Mary
Over all in the room—plaintive Nœmi
And the almah-maids, unawares singing soft—
Eleazer giving the last kiss, in accordance
With the custom of his people—closing
The half-beautiful eyes,—a fragrance in th' room
As of roses and sandal-coals. Our Anna,
Gone on before, beautiful forerunner!
Heaven's destined queen has one from the band
Of virgins that surround, to shoot on before
In the white robes of her almahhood to tell
Kings and prophets the morning is near.

FUNEREAL.

SCENE.—(*An hour after—from the dawn until the burial.*)

The dawn looking into the cell holily—
Nœmi and the matrons dressing the dead—

The corpse-bath of myrrh and roses—linen
And spices—the bier of ithel-wood, shining
As ebony—the dead almah in choir-robes.
Fair was the almah in her beautiful death-robes,
Anna, matron-mother, and Mary by her bier
Saying prayers, Nœmi, old nurse, still chanting
Her low *miserere:*—weeping came the almahs
And covered her bier with white flowers,—the harps
Of the almahs first touched to sadness, all day
Rang harp and kittor to notes funereal;—
Eleazer—it is a sad sight to see an old man weep,
Sitting upon the earth, ashes upon his head,
Loins in sackcloth: seven days sat the mourners
With him, and then they arose up and buried
Her. What was he now? a withered old tree,
All his young limbs dead. Last of two races!
And they buried her by the light of the stars
After twilight, the almahs bearing torches
Reversed; and the grave was made in the gardens
Of Solomon, a little sepulchre hewn from th' rock,
And there was a shelf where they sat down the bier;
And each of the almahs laid a lock of her hair
At the feet of their sister to show their sorrow;
Then Nœmi covered the face of her child
With her almah-veil, and all her dear body
And robes with an embroidered quilt from Egypt,

Carefully tucked under every corner. Dear nurse,
It was the last she could do for her darling!
As she covered the body, saw the curls
Of the almahs, caressing the feet that should
No more with them walk, transplanted the curl
That was amber—no one observed—the veil
As arranging, laid it in the dear palms,
Closed as in prayer, just over the bosom
Or heart, sighing, so will her spirit best love
To see it—holding it so in her dead hands.
And the almahs laid branches cut from th' trees
Of frankincense over the bier, and at her feet
Their torches reversed and quenched, and the tomb
Was closed, and made fast, and sealed, and Zachary
And all the priests and the almahs went back
Unto th' temple, but Eleazer sat down under a tree
And wept, and when th' gates were shut came not up.

Dirge of Eleazer.

(*Mournfully singing to himself at the midnight, alone in the gardens.*)

'The tent of my fair one
Is blown down: one flower grew in the desert
For me, one white rose-tree in the wilderness:
The simoon saw by the well of Abraham,
In the desert of sands, my white flower and smote

It: a storm in the mountains of Judah
Swept over my rose-tree and bowed it: a dove
Sought refuge at Thy altars, O Lord my God!
And th' spoiler hath sought her there: I had one ewe-lamb
And the Lord took her. Had His altars lack
For a sacrifice? But the Lord hath taken,
Blessed be His name! 'Naked came I into the world,
And naked will I go out of it!'
All night long
Sat Eleazer under the tree that grew over th' rock
By the grave, but in the morning came Mary:
It is alway morning when Mary comes to mourners,
Or there is a break as of the morning after night:
Sweet comfortress, she had longed to come in th' night,
But the virgins went not forth after the closing
Of the gates. But night flies the steps of morning
And Mary. Beautiful Aurora! Beautiful Mary!
Our Aurora, what the fresh and roseate dawn
Is unto day fully risen. Mary the young Virgin
That walks between the Prophets and the Gospel.
Eleazer loves th' footsteps of Mary. Who would not?
Looking up for pity—
'I had a Miriam once,
I sat by her tomb, but there was a white flower
To grow over it: this tomb has no flower!
It is so sad to die and leave not a seed!'

Th' dark leaves of th' olives are lustrous in their dews:
Mary stood before and beneath, in her stiff robe
Of sackcloth, her pale golden locks shining
Through the net into which she had gathered
Them: But in her angelic modesty, as the maid
Of Araby hides the roses of Yemen she carries
In her bosom under her veil, so hides Mary
Her thoughts for God, and kneels upon the turf
For Eleazer to bless her. And Eleazer rose up,
And as he blessed her a peace stole into his heart,
And he could leave his dead child with Abraham
And Enoch and David and God. He could leave
His child with the Lord God of Israel now,
And he blessed her. What a beautiful privilege,
To be a priest—over a soul kneeling to hold
Anointed hands and bless her,—to be a priest
And bless Mary—Mary in her spotlessness,
In her one rose-white, fragrant virginity!
And Eleazer blessed MARY IMMACULATE.
Let the picture stand, 't is too beautiful to lose—
Gardens of Solomon in their dews, the sun
Painting the sky over the mountains of Arabia
Beyond, fresh tomb in the rock, old man rising
Up in the majesty of grief, reverence-touched,
To bless the young mother of Him who shall hang

Up over on that Calvary beyond, and sit
Afterward on the throne with His Father down.

Grave of the Almah.

And when Anna and Joachim next had come,
Mary went with them to the sepulchre down,
And Eleazer with them, followed likewise down,
Dear old man, he had made the rock beautiful.
He had sought out carvers of stone, and chose
The most cunning of the workmen that wrought
Thereon. On one side of the rock was an altar,
And the altar was cast down and the censer
Was broken; on the other side of the sepulchre
Was a young cedar, and the tree was up-rooted,
And in the branches of the tree was a crown
And a mitre, and under the boughs of the tree,
Upon the ground, lay a nest overturned—
A dove and its young, and its young was but one;
And on the door of the tomb was Anna
In Hebrew—the pure Chaldaic, in a circle
Of divers devices—a lily-bud, severed,
A stemless rose, a lamb on the altar,
A dove in the snare, and a distaff half filled.
Seven circular beds were before the door—
Paths paved with stones of the agate between—
These beds the companions of Anna had planted

With flowers, the white rose of Jericho, lilies
From the vales below and other varieties;
Next to the rock, planted, Mary, and the flowers
That Mary planted gave odors that embalmed
All the varieties, and Mary chose violets—
White violets for a virgin, an almah
Dying young. Precious in the eyes of Mary
Are graves! Graves of her dead whom she stood by
In their dying. "Sleep," said Anna, "sweetest
Of all the companions of Mary," and Nœmi,
Who came also down, began to lament here,
We all go unto her, continued Anna,
Be comforted, Nœmi and Joachim observed,
"It is a good and wholesome thought to pray
For the dead," and Nœmi plucked a white flower
That grew at the door of the sepulchre
And gave unto Joachim and to Anna.

Saint Anna, comforter of the afflicted, pray for us."
"*Gate of the heavenly Jerusalem Immaculate, pray for us.*"
"*Saint Anna, glory of Priest and Levites, pray for us.*"
"*Light of Angels, Immaculate, pray for us.*"
"*Saint Anna, cloud full of dew, pray for us.*"
"*Star of the world Immaculate, pray for us.*"

CHAPTER XXX.

OTHER COMPANIONS.

"Virgo Clemens, ora pro nobis."

AND after the death of Anna, sweet friend,
And after the parents had again journeyed back,
The eighth time, we see her walking more times apart.
Doth she never sigh, lonely rose, for the bower
On the hills over the vale of Esdrælon—
That country of shepherds, fresh, flowery, and cool?
It lies in her heart, it will lie there forever,
The dear old cot and pastures patriarchal!
Yet loving but the more daily the dearer courts
Of the House of her God. Where there is sacrifice
There is love, where there is love, there is sacrifice.
Mary comes forth, in the softly-surrounded twilight
Caressing the flowers, studying Calvary, where the peaks
Burn after the meridian—going down to the hearts
Of the gardens, wandering by the limpid runs,
Looking back to the mountain, hearing the bulbul
And rose-bird, angels counting and marking
Her footsteps. Where she steps every track a cradle
For flowers, where flowers will grow sweetest hereafter,

And souls find dearest prayer-places, dying-places,
Altar-places, cell-sites, hermitages for Jesus—
Crickets waken as she passes recollect with God,
Glow-worms thicken, linnets, thrushes, and nightingales,
And bulbuls flooding the air, enriching the night,
A rim of the new moon with stars over Mary
And the gardens, and God over and above all.

But in this pure abode even—and holiness,
And humility intrench her—but scandal
Walked into the midst of this garden of sweets
One day and sought her, strange to believe!
Evil is sure to creep in where there is good,
Seeking out covertly all sanctities; and there
Will be a Judas, and one who is tempted
And tempts, and truth remain nevertheless,
While the wheat and the tares grow together.
And the virgins who dwelt now with Mary,
Those who took the place of the departed,
These may have been their names, Miriam, Ruth,
Deborah, Abishag, Eve, Mical, and Leah,—
And Mary had given them all sweet welcome
When entered, and alway, and all had well-gone,
But Mical was proud and Eve envied Mary,
And pride grew in the heart of Mical,
Who was comely and vain of her beauty,

For she hearkened unto the whisperings of Eve,
"She thinketh to rule over us!" (now Mary
Thought to rule over no one: none so humble
Walked the courts of the Lord,) saying, "the elder
Alway think to bear sway over the younger,"
"I shall not bow down or follow her; will
Mical?" "Mayhap we are not lily-tinted
And timid, but brilliant and fair to look on,"
"Shall we only hear Mary praised by the priests
And th' matrons?" "Praised as the comeliest,
Praised as the holiest?" "What does she more than all?"
And Mical when she saw Mary more fair
Than herself envied to hear continual good
Spoken of Mary, and that old enemy
Of Eden was pleased with Mical, and found
Suggestions for Eve, and gave to her cunning
To worm into the heart of Nœmi also,
Growing to her dotage, and this was a grief
To Mary, for Nœmi was the old nurse
Of Anna; but Mary loved Nœmi more,
And Nœmi was only turned from her by fits,
As Eve wrought upon her by feigned caresses.
"See," said Eve to Mical, "the purple is given
Her to spin, I believe not the tale of the angel:"
"The angel was only one of the priests, Esther
And Judith but made that out for Mary."

And when, moreover, Mical saw Mary's hand
Beautified all that she spun, then was Mical
Vexed in her heart and more envied Mary,
And when she saw all the choicest embroideries
Were given to her, and that she wrought flowers
More excellent than all, then was she displeased,
And the heart of Mical with Eve was clean gone
From Mary, and bent on causing her sorrow.
How could any one cause grief unto Mary?
Yet they could; and to this day the world is full
Of Eves and Micals,—those who kiss the Son (Judas
Did in the garden) and strike at the Mother.
So they laid nets also to flatter the mistresses
And to deceive the other virgins; but Mary
They never flattered, and covertly treated her rude.
And Mical seemed more swift than all obedient,
And sought to dust all the altars, and arrange
Adornings, and most to do all of those things
Which Mary chiefly had done, and she so won
On the mistresses, the decorations, the vases
And flowers, and the compounding of incense
That Mary had liked to make, was given
To her. Now Mary mingled incense jealous
To smell th' sweet fragrancies, jealous to reserve
All for God; but when Mical made incense
She would have smelled up all the odors,

So little devotion had Mical. She eats
Not! "Maidens live not on air!" "Does she thrive
On a cup of goat's milk?" "She takes no meats—
A cup and a seed-cake!" "Not enough to keep
Flying a sparrow!" "She eats not or she thieves!"
Said Eve, said Mical, and the virgins were beguiled;
So would the first almahs not been; not so
Sarah, Rebekah, Abigail, Rachel, Esther,
Or Judith, or Anna, the dear dead! More hours
Than ever spent Mary by that sepulchre
Now in the gardens. Oh! the dead are always
So true! All change but the dead: But most hours
Gave Mary to mortifications and prayer,
That intense mortification of soul bowed
Down to the dust at the Feet of the Lord,
Who loveth his white Lily kissing his Feet
In her tears: so was she prepared to be the Mother
Of the Sufferer, and of all who shall suffer
With Him; and she neglected none of her tasks.
Mary had meantime one comfort untaken,
Anna, the matron, fallen sick before this came,
Mary was selected to nurse many hours;
And yet spoke not of all this to Anna.
Mary never accuses, Mary may suffer,
But Mary, Mother of Mercy and of Peace,
Never accuses. None the less serene, none

The less pure, none the less sweet, though so sad,
Walked Mary the terrace, and the virgins
All shunned her and believed the whisperings
Of Eve, and she watered her couch with her tears;
But the tears of Mary always fell peacefully,
Fruitfully, dear weeper! only she prayed more,
She who had always prayed alway, only she kept
Fasts more,—and the fasts of the Jews were from sun
To sun,—and she wept not alone, nor most
For the evil done unto her. The eyes
Of this mournful young daughter of the prophets
Were unsealed as she prayed in the night-watches
Upon her bed fasting.

"Angel melodies were near her,
Oft entrancing all her frame,
Yet there was a sorrow dearer,
For from love that sorrow came.
She the destined Bride of Heaven,
Through the Spirit viewed the world;
Saw the souls from virtue riven,
Saw the flag of sin unfurled.
And a mighty sorrow bowed her,
Mastering all her mighty soul;
Sorrow with which love endowed her,—
Love of God beyond control.
Sorrow for His outraged glory,
Sorrow for her brother's sin,
Sorrow for man's guilty story,
Since that story did begin.
Angel harpings were unheeded
When that sorrow filled her sense:
Tears and prayers for pardon pleaded
With the dread Omnipotence!

Prayers with hope! the promise given
Brightly shone with glorious ray!
O come Messias, come from Heaven,
Chase these clouds of sin away!"

AVE MARIA—*Magazine.*

Pure advocate, she saw and wept for all sinners,
And God gathered up all of her tears and gave
Her back graces for all, otherwise, God
Could not have suffered His young mother weep.
And Mary prayed for those who wrought her evil;
But the hearts of the almahs were stolen,
"The hearts of my companions are stolen
From me." The Lord did so permit to try
His perfect One. And the hearts of the almahs
Were beguiled for a season, from the time
That Zachary went up to his house in Hebron
To the days that he came to the temple again,
And it was told unto Zachary, "She doth
Not eat," and Zachary saw that the faces
Of the virgins were turned against Mary,
And Zachary straightway investigated,
And then Zachary took the part of Mary,
And made all of her innocence known,
And the father of Eve sent up the silver,*
And she was redeemed from the vow and sent

* An almah could be redeemed at any time from the cloisters of Israel, it appears, by the payment of a certain sum.

Out from the temple, and all the priests incensed
At th' scandal would likewise have done by Mical,
But when Mical knew all this and that Mary
Rejoiced not at her shame she went and fell
At the feet of Mary in her tears, and Mary
Would not so suffer Mical, but lifted her up,
Saying, Weep not, my sister, if thou hast done
Ill, it has been done more unto the Lord,
Being in His House, than unto his handmaiden,
And kissed her;—thus Mary conquers foes—
And went unto Zachary and besought for Mical,
Her companion, and the priests heard the prayers
Of Mary: and Mical loved Mary from that day
More than all the virgins, and all the virgins
And matrons loved Mary more than before this came.
Now all the precious compoundings had been taken,
All the mingling of incense from Mical,
And the filling of vases and the adornings;
But Mary chose Mical to help her in all
Of these things, and so that it pleased Mary,
It was pleasing to Zachary and the priests,—
Priests always like to please Mary,—I speak
Of God's priests,—and Mary weighed the spices
And Mical assisted Mary compounding
Precious incense for the censers devoutly,
"Filling the lamps with pure oil of olives perfumed,"

Making up bouquets for the altar piously,
And there was no more scandal but there was more love.
And after this the new almahs vied to walk
With Mary on the terrace and in the yards.
To walk with Mary! How in all after life,
Lovely girls, will they think of her words and her ways.
To be brought up with Mary, it is the only thing
That I would be a child for—to grow up with Mary.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SUPPER OF OUR MOTHER.

OR A DEAR OLDEN TRADITION.

"Vas Honorabile, ora pro nobis."

WE have seen it was said to Zachary,
"Mary eats all day no food;" "all day stand
The figs untasted," "and the loaf of the barley,"
"And the kernels of corn, sweet, roasted, and tender,"
"And the cup of goat's milk is unlipped:"
And Zachary commanded, Disturb not the maid,
But he watched; and lo when it was eventide
And in the twilight, there came an angel
To the cell of Mary:—Zachary was hid

And concealed by the tapestry to watch:
And the angel came in to Mary as she sat
In the cell, bowing down as he approached,
And on his knees the angel offered a cup
Unto Mary, wherein he brought somewhat to drink.
Zachary saw not what she drank, but the cup
Was as a sapphire, and he had never seen
Such pearls as were about the rim; and the cup
Was more beautiful than the cup of Livia,*
And there was nothing like it in the temple,
And none of the vases of the princes of Asia
Compared with its beauty. Mary took the cup
And looking up first to Heaven gave thanks,
And the angel looked down and smiled
As Mary gave her thanks, and then she drank,
And as she drank her face grew beautiful,
And Zachary marvelled and exulted but stirred not:
And then Zachary saw that the angel held
In his hand a plate, and the plate was of gold,
And the *paten* had bread thereon or manna

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* About the time of the Presentation of Mary, the empress Livia, and nearly all the princes of Asia, sent magnificent presents to the temple, vases of gold, &c.—*See Josephus*, who gives an elaborate description of the massive table of gold presented by Ptolemy Philadelphus, which was "incrusted with precious stones."

Similar unto the manna that was stored
In the golden pots of Aaron, white and of size
Like unto coriander, seed, but larger,
And each bread or manna had a mark thereon,
That none but she that ate knew, and she took
But one bread and she ate without breaking,
And her face grew brighter after she had eaten.
And the angel received back here the *paten*,
And he drew a mantle of bright colors
He wore on his breast over, and bowing
Down once again unto the Virgin, spake not
As he went out: and Mary remaining knelt,
Prayed till it was dark, and when it was dark
Zachary went out and the Virgin perceived not.
And many nights, watched Zachary the angel come,
But told no one at this time, and commanded
The Virgin should be no more pressed to eat.

CHAPTER XXXII.

LAST VISITS.

"SAINT ANNA, SURE ROAD FOR TRAVELLERS, PRAY FOR US."

ANNA and Joachim coming down the dear hill,
The ninth and the tenth time, going up to Mary.

At first there was a mule but for Anna,
And Joachim walked guiding the mule,—
And Joachim throve in those days, and drove
Up many sheep and goats for the sacrifice;—
But at length the mule of Joachim stood
By the mule of Anna at the doorway to start
While th' stars were still thick in the sky, th' beast,
Too, was a staid one and used to the rider,
For Joachim was growing very old now,
And to ride was the last choice, and that getting
The cool of the day: so getting to Mary earlier,
Likewise. Dear parents, it always makes us glad
To see you journeying toward Mary, Ave,
Almost angelic motherhood! Ave, almost
Angelic fatherhood! O, those reunions
In the dear House of the Lord! and our parents
Renewed their vow every year, kneeling down
Each time come, and saying it unto the Lord
Singularly tender, dear saints! This time (the tenth)
More than erst, Joachim prays, the luminous tears
Falling more large and fast, and he totters now
As he goes down the steps, dear Sire! Mary goes
Out with her father and mother unto the gates—
O that parting! Joachim parting with Mary!
The father alway had yielded unto the mother
The last embrace till this morning, now he puts

His arms around her the second time even
After he has given his blessing. 'Tis frequent
And sweet to see a mother weep, but a father!
Look my eyes and let thy tears drop, and look long!
Perhaps it is the last time you may see
Them together, that dear Nazareth family;—
That dearest and purest type of families,
Sire, daughter, spouse,—Joachim, Mary, Anna!
A last time must come!—and they departed.
Mical came to meet Mary as she came back
In her tears to the temple—Good Mical!

(Anna *and* Joachim *returning.*)

Forgetting their age, so pressing on they came,
Not so going back: returning is not coming.
From, alack! is not going to Mary.
Turning from God's blessed House and Mary,
To pious souls is always sad, what must
This then have been to Anna, to Joachim?
But God will go with you alway everywhere,
The Lord and his angel, good saints, fear ye not.
And the evil that Eve wrought was not told—
It might grieve them and the scandal was repaired,
And it pleased them to see Mical love Mary;
But Zachary made privately known to Joachim,
How that an angel brought food unto Mary,

And he is journeying home pondering thereon.
Admirable parents! admirable daughter! and Mary
Continued in the temple many more days, growing
To God's purpose.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

DRAWING TOWARD ABRAHAM'S BOSOM.

"SAINT ANNA, SUPPORT OF THE WEAK, PRAY FOR US."

SCENE.—ANNA *and* JOACHIM *sitting together side by side in the porch of the little Cottage at Nazareth a few days after their return from Jerusalem.—Dear old couple, type of what marriage should be on earth, at its close.*

JOACHIM.

ANNA, why sit the sparrows silent all day
Under the eaves? Has there a summer come
When there are no birds? It seems I have heard
The doves coo, never so little. Have we doves
That never murmur to their mates now, good spouse?

ANNA.

Can a dove forget her dear mate? You are
Getting deaf, father, we are growing old now,
Growing old together!

[Anna sighed here,

For the step of Joachim grew heavier
On the threshold fast, and she had a fear
Of being left;—"Growing old together!"]

JOACHIM.

True, that is it. I am growing deaf—grown
A-sudden deaf! Yet thank God! I can hear
You, Anna, the rest matters less, I am like
An old tent the winds have nigh beaten down!
Nay, brush that tear from the eye, tender spouse,
"If I die, I shall live."

(*A long silence succeeds.*)

JOACHIM.

I was troubled
When I thought I would never hear the voice
Of the fowl or the bird, or the call of the sheep,
Or the kine from the pastures. But I am near
The world where we want neither flocks or herds,
Where we may hear th' birds sing forever, Anna,
Or hearing the angels may not think of th' birds,
Or waiting for God may not hear the angels
Even. How little we know of that land
We go to. The Rabbins say it is pleasant,
That the dates of paradise refresh the palate,
That it's the Eden from which Adam was driven,

We know not from the prophets; yet when God
Has been a Father to us here, I think
That to walk out undoubting and trusting,
Hearing His call, it will please him to see
Us coming doubting not the Lord our Father.
I shall go soon. I keep my staff ready.
Nay, weep not, good spouse, you will soon follow.

And Anna wept not, and tried to prepare
Her heart, doing all things to make Joachim
And his last days happy, dearest Anna,
It was so kind in her! Who would expect
To find any thing in Anna but kind,
And ready, and able? So was she worthy
To be the mother of Mary. But Joachim
Failed faster than Anna had thought. Not so soon!
Oh, never where love waits can it think so soon!
So precious to prolong those dear last days.
But the next day, Anna, watchful for love,
For her own heart's sake and for Joachim,
Saw much change, and ere it was noon had sent
For the elders of the tribe—those the nearest
Of kin—ten, as the manner of the Hebrews,
And a scribe, and in the presence of all

Joachim made his confession* for dying.
All the deeds of his life named he, all the thoughts
Of his heart confessed he, and the scribe wrote
Them down and gave the roll unto Anna.
What a fair record! His life had been pure
As that of a child, dear old man! And Anna
Many a time after wept over it in peace.
Oh, the legacy a good life is to leave!
Pious old patriarch, purest and best
Of his fathers! then he left his substance,
A third for Anna, a third for the child
In the Temple, and a third for sacrifices;
And when he had mentioned all of these things,
And blessed Anna and all of his kinsmen,
He talked with Mary. "He wanders!" they said,
Standing by as he talked only *with* Mary—
Over the cradle of that dear, holy babe—
To Mary a little child—was showing
Her flowers—begging her to speak and to sing:
Now they were going up to the temple,—
Few words he said, but Anna kept the thread,

---

* "The Hebrew confession is from all antiquity; the Jews made it before death, not only *aloud*, but *before ten persons* and a Rabbin, and they had also prayers for the agonizing. *Aaron ben Barachia*, in his book treating of the art of dying well, records the method of confessing and the prayers." See Basanage b. vii. ch. 24.

How could she lose it? it wound round her heart
Too, as his. He said then again the vow
They said when they presented her,—blessed
Her as at parting.—There he paused and prayed—
And as he prays – silent—rapt—suddenly
His face grows shining, looking up heavenward,
Crying out with a great rapture, "She sitteth
At His right hand and His angels bow down
To her!"*—and Anna understood that he spake
This of Mary, but those standing by understood
This not,—and his face glowing more and more,
So his soul passed.———Blessed Saint Joachim! pray
For us now and at the hour of our death!

"I AM MADE A WIDOW."

Anna was a widow, desolate name!
And her kinsmen stayed with her many days
And bewailed with her for her spouse, and made
Great mourning, and Anna made a funeral
For Joachim, and sent up soon as he died
Talents of silver, a certain amount, to the temple

* "Pious authors have thought that at the moment that Joachim extended his hands to give his farewell benediction.... the glories for which Heaven destined his child, were suddenly revealed to him from on high; then the joy of the elect was diffused over his venerable countenance: he let fall his hands, inclined his head, and died."—ORSINI.

For prayers,* and a messenger with sackcloth
To Mary—dear child, knowing not her father is dead!
And the messenger came in unto Mary
In the temple, the third day, with his garments rent
And having ashes upon his head, and he fell
Down before her on the ground beating his breast,
And told her of the death of Joachim, her father,
And Mary when she had heard it arose
And put on the garment of sackcloth and went
In before the altar of the Lord her God
To pray,† and as Mary prayed she gave thanks
For the birth of her father and his just life,
She gave thanks for his pious death and prayed
For his soul: and Mary prayed for Anna and wept
As she prayed for her, left now in her old age
And sorrow on the Hill alone. And God heard
Mary pray and consoled His young handmaiden,
And Mary fasted and wept and sat down in ashes
And sackcloth according to the days of her people.
And Anna lived three years yet before Mary
Returned, dear, true widow of Nazareth!

---

* When the seven days were ended, Anna had lamps lit in the synagogue and prayers offered up for her husband.—ORSINI.

† An ancient and generally received tradition.

"SAINT ANNA, MOTHER OF WIDOWS, PRAY FOR US."

They had come down since the morning of marriage
As two trees leaning upon each other:
It was night, one tree was alone and bent,
And the storm beat on it. Woe! Woe! for all ties
Of earth when the longest, the truest, break thus!
Oh, evanescent world! thou hast death-hands!
Thy hands stretched to bless are death-hands! thy hands
Holding bribes—death-hands! Thou wilt take all back!
God will not take himself back, God cheats not
His lovers so! God stays! Give us God!—God!

Anna sorrowed sore for her spouse: never
Came she more to the temple up,—her heart
Too, so hungry for the face of her child,
But how could she go up unto the child,
Or journey without Joachim, or leave
That dear grave so long in the gardens?
Mary shall come when the days of the vow
Are ended and the priests of the temple
Hath given her spouse; but she is a widow,
And they shall select as Joachim hath named,
She will send up her offerings to the altar
And stay by the grave of her spouse, sad Anna!
Not that she loved Mary less, dear Mother!
But she is a widow, aged and stricken.

Loved she Joachim—loved she Mary most?
Both in their place. One, all the chaste love
Since Eve wept more that she had ruined Adam:
Joachim was a Jacob serving life-long
For Rachel—it seemed but a day—a man
Good as Abraham, Moses, or Enoch,—
And by the dear election of God greater,—
A man worthy to be the spouse of Anna
And the father of Mary, and Anna
Knew all his goodness: and her love for Mary,
All the love of a mother for the child
Of her old age and her vows, that dear pride
Of a mother for the sweetest created face,
That one "rose among the daughters" in her house,
That fairest flower yet born of woman:
The attachment of her spouse—a sun that dried
Th' tears of her youth and made beautiful th' paths
Of her spousehood, mellowed as peaches ripen
The borders of her matronhood, and had gone shining,
Never in cloud, almost down to her grave
Till that day the sun shut it out forever!
Sorrowful Anna! the love of Joachim
As the love of Duke Louis and Saint Elisabeth,
All that is holy, all that is precious
In conjugal affection, all that man can
Be unto woman all that woman can

Be unto man, such had been Joachim
To Anna, such had Anna been unto Joachim:
Her child, and that dear religious love, that all
That was human and more that was superhuman:
In brief, one love seemed more life-long in-wound
One life in two, the staff of her comfort,
The even stay of all her serene, holy days,
Her pillar against which she leaned and found rest,—
It was broken and she had nowhere to lean!
She was standing in a desert and nowhere
To lean! One was her pillar, her staff, and one,
The rose in her bosom perfuming her heart.
But her rose is lent to the Lord, and she has nowhere
To lean, lonely Anna-widow!

MARY,

The days of mourning being accomplished,
A year and a month, as the rule of her people,
Arose and put off her sackcloth and put
On her blue raiment and white cincture* again;
But never ceased to make prayers for her father,

---

* "The women of Nazareth wear a tunic of celestial blue confined by a white cincture, with shoes corresponding to the robe. The soft folds of a white tunic fall gracefully over the blue."—M. DE LAMARTINE.

Or to fast the day of the week that he died,*
Her beloved and tender patriarchal father!

CHAPTER XXXIV.

LAST YEARS.

"Speculum Justitiæ, ora pro nobis."

AND the life of Mary developed, beautiful life!
She grew in the sun, she grew in the shade,
And Mary grew fast—symmetrical—white—
And Mary grew perfect, "one is my perfect one,"—
And the Father leaned over His Throne
To the Gardens of Moriah complacent,
And that Babe dilected on His dear "bed
Of spices" shining down into her bosom,
Illuminating that transparent being,—
O, the transparencies of Mary! dear depths
Where He will one day lie hidden! burning down
Until create purity attracts the Uncreate,

---

* Various dates have been assigned for the death of Joachim. We follow that of *Père Croiset*, who says the Virgin had been shut up in the temple nine years; thus had entered her tenth year.

And Uncreate Purity wants Mary. Flesh
And blood and human soul, so lit with God,
So reflect God, time—God—eternal time
Precipitates, God makes haste to come—God
Wants consummation! God wants His Mother!
Bold words but true, bold words, and we bow low
As the dust as we say them, and Mary
Bows lower than we every time one says
Them for her—higher souls bow the lowest,
The lowest before God,—and impatient—
That dear Dove-spouse hovers 'twixt Heaven and Mary,
And the God three-fold and one-fold watch
Over that temple where she prays and toils
And sleeps, over that garden where she walks
In her freshness and piety and vocation—
Wondrous one-vocation, to be God's Mother!
And she moves on serenely-still, her fragrant
And illuminated way, God's Virgin! Dear Virgin!
And that is her charm — her oneness with God—
Mirror of Jesus! God's Virgin! She is God's Virgin.

O, unreserved devotedness!
And we may say divine,
Her life without, her life within,
In all does Jesus shine.

The movements of her sacred body,
Her words, her smiles, her sighs,
Her steps, her chaste repast, her sleep,—
As the smooth shuttle flies—

From God to God all swift return,
And every thing expands,
In her develops, terminates
In God, and perfect in His hands.

This is her grand virginity,
O dove among the doves!
In all she does, in all she says,
Mary in all she loves,

Inviolable, perfect, pure,
She is in every way
A Virgin sealed for God who smiles
And passes on her way.

And all who saw her admired her more and more.
"*Diadem of Virgins Immaculate, pray for us!*"

CHAPTER XXXV.

ELEVENTH ANNIVERSARY AT NAZARETH.

"SAINT ANNA, SUCCOR OF ALL THOSE WHO CALL UPON THEE, PRAY FOR US."

And MARY *had been in the temple this was the eleventh year.*

ANNA.

THEY will weave her wedding-garment very fair,
And her spousals shall be in the House of Prayer;
All the almahs are betrothed there; so was I, so was dear Elisabeth.
I will send the silver, they must bind the marriage for the maid of Nazareth,
Bind and bless the nuptials, for I am a widow in my cincture,
And I cannot rob my Joachim yet to put on wedding-vesture,
Only one year more! May my Lord forgive if I am glad.
Living here alone in Nazareth, 'tis so very sad!

Just a twelve-month from to-day
Will fulfil my vow;
She may take the homeward way,
I am longing for it now.

I will bake cakes for the poor,
I will sweep the little room,
I will spin, I will embroider,
I will drive the busy loom.

Driving so the sorrow some
From my lonesome house,
From my lonesome heart, crying
Ever for its spouse.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

UNDER THE WINGS OF THE ANGELS.

"Fœderis arca, ora pro nobis."

AND it came to pass in these days, Mary
Had desire to go in unto the Holies,—
To get some how closer up to God's Feet.
She was knelt, Virgin of predilection!
Before the great curtain she had completed;
It came and it stayed, the desire. "Might
She not venture?" The foot of the vestal
Comes far as the Levite; but even the Levite
Tracks not this threshold—room of Jehovah!
None but the High Priest yearly, and after what

Of purifications, sacrifices, blood, all the people
Bowed down and trembling till he came out alive.
"May she not enter, she, in the eyes of the Lord
Of the House, purer and higher than High Priest
Or angel?" Not of her will, not of the Priests
Who guard the threshold, awful and veiled?
Priest nor Mary may break not or bend line
From the Law, even the Son will come to fulfil.
She will take what is given. O, how raptly!
Worshipfully! sweet model! silent, not asking,—
Her heart crying still so for God, dear Adorer!
Bowed down in her meekness face to the floor;
But thought not to go in—only had desired,
And the desire stayed; as she slept that night
In her dream she still knelt by the Holies
And her heart burned to pray beneath the wings
Of the angels. Let her ask, said a voice
In her dream. Nay, nay, she is too humble,
The humility of his handmaid is too humble,
And she slept; but at the midnight the angel
Stood by her couch and said, The Lord has seen
The desire of thy heart and it is good.
In the morning thou shalt show thy desire
Unto Zachary, for lo, on the third night
Thou shalt go in unto the Lord and adore.
Now the sanctuary was given in charge

To Zachary. Mary slept after the angel
Had departed, and when the morning had come,
Made the vision and words of the angel
Known to Zachary. Zachary, nothing doubting
It was the angel whom he had seen bringing
Her food and whose presence was seraphic,
Was troubled, and said, Hark that which the Lord
Saith to thee this night also, and Zachary
Prayed all that night in his chamber, and Mary
Came in the morning to meet him in the court
And told unto him the same word of the Lord:
Then Zachary said, I will pray at the altar;
And Zachary having come back to Mary
Bade her go in unto the High Priest and tell
Him the vision; and Mary drew close her veil
And went timidly in. Now the High Priest
Was old, very old; when he made sacrifice
He was brought in upon his chair; and Mary
Was confused, and the High Priest said, Draw near,
My daughter, and fear not, I know Anna
Thy mother, and Joachim thy just father;
And Mary knelt at the feet of the High Priest
And he blessed her and said, Speak, my daughter,
To me and tell me, and keep nothing back;
And Mary kept nothing back, and when he asked
Concerning the angel who had brought her food,—

For Zachary had shown it to him,—Mary
Acknowledged, and her head bowed to the floor,
Dear, humble Virgin! and the High Priest, assured
That she was raised up for some great purpose,
And believing the thing was from the Lord,
Said, Speak not of it, but obey the word
Of the Lord. If His angel come this night,
Say thou to the angel, Thy handmaid waiteth,
But go not thou in before the angel,
Or by thyself, lest thou die; but fear thou not,
If the angel leadeth: moreover, lay not off
Thy vesture as thou liest down save thy veil
And sandals. The Lord thy God bless thee, my daughter,
And keep thee! Watch not thou, but if the angel
Waken thee, arise thou, and say as did Samuel,
Speak, Lord, for thy handmaiden heareth; then do
That which the Lord, He permitteth, quickly,
For the Lord only is great and Lord of His House.
And Mary kissed the fringe of the garment
Of the High Priest, and went out from his presence
In her calm, for a great peace had fallen
To her; and she prayed again at the sunset
That same day at the door of the sanctuary
Till the shutting of the gates. The High Priest
Had said to Zachary, Keep thyself alone
The door of the sanctuary this night moreover;

And when Zachary drew toward the door, Mary
Passed him going up to her cell, but her face
Was hid in her veil and she saw not Zachary.
The Lord loveth the humble, said the Priest
As he watched her go up through the corridor.
But at midnight while Mary slept,—she had
Lain down and slept as directed,—the angel
Stood by and awakened her. Only once spake
The angel, and she arose and bowed down
At his feet, and said as the High Priest had bade.
And the angel was holding the veil of Mary,
And Mary saw the veil shone but marvelled not
A veil should shine in the hands of an angel.
Put not on thy sandals, said the angel,
And taking her by the hand the angel
Led forth Mary, and the tapestry lifted
And withdrew as they passed out and she saw
No hand withdraw it, and the doors opened,
As for Peter and his angel hereafter
Walking out of prison; and Zachary lifted
Up his eyes about the midnight and saw
An angel leading Mary in, and withdrew
From the door where he had knelt since the closing
Of the gates, and bowed himself down on his face,
And the curtain that was ponderous, weighed down
With jewels, unveiled and their shadows fell

On the floor that was sacred and impenetrable.
Behold the shadow of Mary on the floor
That was hidden and polished and overlaid
With mysteries in gold, as of the moon in a lake!
Zachary lifted his head, gazed in and saw
And fell upon his face the second time,
And how long they remained knew not, for time
Seemed unto him as though it had not been,
When having come unto himself he arose,
And approaching nigh unto the door stood
Gazing. Thus an old tapestry represents:*
A mercy-seat, the wings of the cherubim,
Overspreading, Mary kneeling under the wings
Of the cherubim, praying before the Ark,
Cherub-heads above her in air, and some one
Peering in at the door. That some one we call
Zachary, and put Gabriel into the tableau,
Prostrate to the floor beside the Virgin worshipping
Under the wings of the angels, or cherubim.
O Mary! What is thy prayer, thy sweet words
Unto God? Not even Gabriel knoweth;

---

* Wrought in the Middle Ages and still preserved. There are three principal tableaux on tapestry: one representing the Virgin spinning in the temple, one embroidering as sketched (see chapter Immaculate Embroiderer), and one picturing on canvas the Virgin within the Holy of Holies.

But its silent breath was the adorative rose
Of all worship yet offered God, and God
Smelled it and was glad. Thou hast made God glad,
Mary, and the heart of Mary shook a-brim
With graces and trembled serene for sweetness,
Fervor and the unwordable consolings
Of God. But we may as well stay the brush;
Who can improvise how Mary loved God?
Or of the beauties, or treasures, or resources
Of grace in her soul out-pouring for God;
Who can talk of the adorations of Mary?
Of the perfumes of the Mystical Rose exhaling
At His Feet? Of the perfumes of the Mystical Rose
Exhaling at the Feet of God? Is n't it beautiful!
And precious! and heavenly! Mary within the Holy
Of Holies? Longing to go in—permitted to go in—
Led in—in. Let us review this picture
Of piety—beauty—heavenliness! It don't seem
We can leave it! Dear Mary! Dear Holies! Dear God!

As the sky was thick with stars, near the midnight,
At the feet of Mary stood an angel,
Watching as in dream her sleep, in the starlight
Stood so still the angel.

And his wing, somewhat whiter than the moon,
And his crown lit the sacred room,

Somewhat softer, somewhat heavenlier than noon,
In a sweet celestial glow or bloom.

Only to his soul—all was touched, all was silence—
"Mary sleeps," said Gabriel;
Ere he woke her, all the airs, unseen angels incense,
Perfume fills the goldened cell.

And the angel spoke not, for he loved to stand and gaze
On that sleep immaculate,
Loved to stand and veil and bask his burnings in the rays
Shed in sleep, loved on her to wait.

MARIA, AVE, Maid of Grace! and she rose
At the Ave of the angel,
She was clothed, ready in her sleep-repose
All but veil and sandal.

And the angel held her veil,—shoes, he said,
As the ground is holy, put not on;
And he placed the veil on her bowèd head
And dropped his heavenly knees upon.

And he took her by the hand with an angel's grace
For his recognizèd Queen, o'er the floor
Of the mystic room he led her, down the silent staircase,
Through the incensed corridor.

And his robing, Mary saw, nothing wondering,
As a nebulæ of stars, and so thick, spot
There was none, eyes to set, sweet was pondering,
Where the stars were not.

And the Priest knelt near to pray—godly Zachary—
Saw them coming and was dumb,
Kneeling—they had entered through the doorway—
Watched them to the Holies come.

Seven times in nearing bowed they,
Or prostrated, Mary and the angel,
Seven times before approaching, stopped to pray
Ere they reached the Holies—breath of sandal,

Heavenly sandal, filling all the sacred air,—
Never perfumes smelled before—
A celestial fragrance guiding to the Place of Prayer,
Through that chancel to adore,

And the veil unveiled as they bowed and prayed before,
Touched by hand unseen uprose,
Or as Mary and the angel knelt down to adore,
The Holies opened for its Rose.

What their prayers were heard the priest not,
For their lips gave forth no sound,

But his eyes the vision to his dying they forgot not,
Of the kneelers on the Covenant-ground.

And an aureola round them—widened round them,
Burning to a pearl and ruby light,
And the Virgin's brows beams as suns endiadem,
And the Holies it is full of light.

Kneeling now is Mary where the cherubim
Inveils, and beneath its wings,
What she's saying now to God, never said the seraphim,
Never half so tender things.

Now she kisses Ark and table, and by love
Opens almost—almost opens Heaven!
Almost to her bosom—almost draws the dear Divine-Dove!
And the Son is almost—almost from that Upper-Bosom
riven!

But our pencil all too cold in glow or gold
When the worship is to be of the Virgin sung or told,
We can only soft unveil the Holies and bow down and gaze
With that silent stricken priest, lost and burning in her rays.

"Let the Heavens drop down, Messiah!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

IMMACULATE ESPOUSALS.

"Vas Spirituale, ora pro nobis."

PART I.

ON the morrow Mary is to be betrothed
And go forth from the temple, so the virgins
Say, her companions, knotting together, seven,
Five or three, to talk of the wonder—Mary
Refuseth, or hath so asked from the priests:
What, sacrifice her hope, that inheritance
And glory for one of Sion's dear daughters?
There was a possible too precious to be lost,
And sterility were in Israel a shame. What marvel!
'Tis strange, said the almahs, and she so pious!
It is strange! but the priests will not allow;
Never such a thing in the temple was known,
And we shall not lose the bridal. It will be here,
For her mother 's a widow. Yet I regret
And I wish, said Ruth, she was alway to stay!
How we shall miss her! said Deborah;

That is true, said Abishag, how can we live
Without Mary! I wish she were to stay
Till I go, said Mical; and till I, said all the almahs.

PART II.

MARY AT THE WELL.

"Vas insigne Devotionis, ora pro nobis."

Or "Humility, which first grew to perfection violet-like in the retired and shady hills of Judea."—ORSINI.

Who is she in raiment blue
Coming through the twilight dew,—

Urn and pitcher clasped around,
Coming to the fountain-ground,—
Whom the soft airs soften round?

Not the cool wave in the well,
Fresh as this Virgin from her cell:

And the thrushes in the tree
Wait her pitcher filled to see,
Pausing in their melody,

And the cool o'ershadowing date
Shadows well and Maid Immaculate.

Not a beetle, bird, or bee,
Beats the air, grass, or tree,
And the picture stands we see.

Wherefore but this Maid is sad,
She whose look was always glad.

See not the sorrow of her eyes
The tenderly o'erbending skies,
Nature wont to sympathize?

Mary come down from her cell,
Troubled by the fountain-well,

Rests her pitcher on the brink
Of the well and stops to think;
At her well of fervors stops to drink:

I would only live for Thee,
But, my Lord, I am not free!

Must I go from Thy dear feet?
Must I render what 's most sweet?
Must I vow and not complete?

Lord, I've vowed my love to Thee,
But, my Lord, I was not free!

Was my vow not dropped from Heaven?
Wherefore, then, should it be riven?
Wherefore my one white flower given?

I would, Lord, thy Virgin be,
But, my Lord, I am not free!

Does her sweet Spouse love her sigh?
Love to hearken in His sky,
To that sweetest silent cry?

Pensive leaned a-down to think,
Pitcher rested on the brink,

Thirsting so to stay with God,
Courting so His threatened rod,
Leaned so meek upon that fountain-sod,

Looking straight up to His sky,
In her trouble clung so nigh.

I think He sees; for the air
Takes a stillness everywhere,
As an adorative breath in prayer,

Hushed to sweetness, or to silence,
Nature waiting God in reverence:

And when all was still, and stood
As the recess of a voiceless wood,—
Nature waiting God in Nature's mood,—

As a calm when God is there,
Mary heard His answer in the air.

Near the well the Heavenly Word
Yet unborn had spoken, Mary heard,
All her soul within her peaceful stirred.

'Thou must leave my hallowed House,
I will veil thee with a spouse;

'He shall be to thee my peace, my truth:
Heaven knows thy virgin worth:
For thy dear vow fear no ruth.'

PART III.

MYSTICAL ROSE BRIDE.

"Rosa Mystica, ora pro nobis."

"Habens odorem spei."

Who is she that cometh out from her cell
To her spousals? "The Queen loveth judgment,
Who can praise her beauty?" Let the saints try:

"A bright and luminous stem whereon has never been either the knot of original sin, or the bark of actual transgression."—ST. AMBROSE.

"The day-cloud which never knew darkness."—ST. JEROME.

"Cast your eyes upon the Son, and then judge what must have been the glory of the Mother."—ST. GREGORY, POPE.

"Thou art more brilliant than the dawn, milder than the silvery moon, purer than the fresh-blown lily, whiter than the mountain snows, more graceful than the rose, more precious than the ruby, more chaste than the angels."
—ERASMUS.

"Her soul revealed itself fully in her look."—ST. AMBROSE.

Pure as the first-blown lily in Eden,
Just a spiritual bride for God in her veils,
There she stands taking the ring—mystical ring!
No fire in her eye but the beams from the sky,
Beautiful! beautiful Mystical Rose Bride!
No blush-paint on her cheek but the glow of Heaven,
Just a white rose in her leafage of gold!
And she was given by the law of Moses and Israel
Unto the spouse God had chosen.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

MARY AND NAZARETH AGAIN.

"Consolatrix Afflictorum, ora pro nobis."

SCENE—ANNA'S *Cottage:* ELEAZER, *with* ASINUS, *saddled at the door;* ELEAZER *fitting a basket of provisions to the saddle of the ass,* ANNA *standing by.*

ANNA.

How he pricks up his ears
And blinks down his eyes;

I 'm certain he hears—
He 's looking so wise.

He knows why he 's bridled;
His coming will please her;—
All waiting and saddled!
God-speed thee, Eleazer.

God speed thee! bear my child back to me,
My Mary and her new spouse.
Tell her, her mother sits at the lattice;
Tell her there is room in Anna's house.

(ELEAZER *departs.*)

Gone! gone! how can I wait four days more
For the going, five for the coming?
Nine days more! nine days more!
At my heart keeps humming.

Eight days more! sang dear Anna,
Eight days! seven days more!
Six days more! sang dear Anna,
Six days! five days! four!

The almahs are weaving
A wreath for her hair;
Can they make with jewels
A lily more fair?

The Spouse brings his silver and ring—
O! I wait so to know
On whom will the priests
The pearl of my bosom bestow?

God give her a spouse
That is pious and wise,
To whom she shall be
As gold in his eyes!

Four days more! sang dear Anna,
Four days! four! three!
Two days more! sang dear Anna,
One day brings my Mary to me!

Oh! the years are long without him,
Hearing not his pleasant voice;
Three years! it is long without Joachim,
But my sorrow shall rejoice.

Oh! the years are long, seeing not his face!
But she comes to me to-morrow:
Smiling in the old home-place,
She shall kiss away my sorrow.

TO-DAY.

ANNA.

(*From her couch.*)

Is it night? is it morning?
O, I cannot sleep! sleep?
When to-morrow I may
On her dear neck weep!

To-morrow? No, it is to-day,
To-day, my child is coming,—
To-day, now! To-day! to-day!
At my heart keeps humming!

Joachim, forgive if I forget thee,
Longing for our child,
Longing for the clasping
Of the maiden Mary, mild.

(*Watching from her casement.*)

O it seems the morning
Never did so wait!
Never was so slow in dawning,
Are the mornings getting late?

Dearest daughter, no she would not
Make a waiting mother wait

No, her dear feet would not tarry
Coming to the Nazareth-gate.

I shall see her ere the moon does,
Riding white Asinus,
As a princess up the Nazareth-hill,
She will soon be coming thus,

With her bridegroom-spouse beside,—
Who is he? Who? I ponder—
God has given her a husband, who,
For a mother, 't is so strange to wonder.

Oh, Joachim! hadst thou lived
Our bride-daughter but to welcome!
She went forth and left a father:
She will find none coming home!

But my sadness may not grieve her,
I will smile for her dear sake,
And her face the lonely lonesome
From my cot may somewhat take.

NOON.

ANNA.

(*Making preparations for* MARY.)

Bring the tender kid, good steward,
I must haste and spread the feast,

We shall see the coming of the bridegroom
By an hour to night at least.

Who are they come up the hill-path?
Huldah, damsel, look for me!
Mark the beast one rideth, is it white?
O, my sweet child! can it be?

I am so afraid not! 't is an hour,
Two, three, before the time
That I looked to see them coming
Up the path of thyme.

Yet, dear Anna, you 've been standing—
Coming—standing—coming—
To that lattice every half-hour, to-day!
"To-day!" at your sweet heart humming.

Lo, the beast is white one rideth
And her raiment blue,—
Mother-Anna; she alighteth!
She is hastening up to you!

ANNA.

(*Still embracing* MARY.)

Would thy father, child, had lived
Only to this precious day!

Mid our joy, we still must
For his dear soul think to pray.

(*Turning to welcome the bridegroom of* MARY.)

And thy spouse,—it is Joseph,
As I live! Now let the Lord
Be praised! who ne'er forgets
The promise of His word.

(*Folding* MARY *again.*)

Beautiful is thy face to Anna; come,
Thou and thy dear spouse,
With the kiss of welcome enter
Into happy Anna's house.

And Anna blessed Mary and Anna blessed Joseph
Her spouse, and welcomed him and led Mary
And Joseph into her house, and the banquet was spread
For them, and the heart of the widow was consoled
By the face of Mary and the face of her spouse.
And Joseph being gone out, Mary conversed
With Anna, and made known to her how her marriage
Was of the Lord, all which edified Anna.

MARY.

(MARY *showing her mother her nuptial-robe,* and the sandals that* MICAL *had for her wrought, tulip-work in gold, and on azure for her betrothal.*)

All was so sweet to me, all was so dear,
Blame me not, mother, I wept while to come
Even to you, mother, and my Nazareth-home:
It was the House of my God, mother,
I wept for to leave,
Let it not a pious heart grieve.

ANNA.

She that loveth God's House more than another,
Loveth not less the nest of her mother.

AFTERNOON WITH ANNA AND MARY.

Anna has wept on the neck of her child,
There 's a lull in her heart more calm.
O, the sweetness of Mary hath ever beguiled,
And pours to all sorrows a balm!

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* "The ground was of a buff or nankeen color, interspersed with flowers of blue, violet, and gold. It is now the holy relic of Chartres."—NICEPHORUS.

MARY.

Sweet is the flower of home,
(*Bending over Anna's lily*) the first
Mine eyes ever saw! Ne'er let me roam!
[And the light of her eye the bloomage nurst,
And so it had bloom
For the cot and the tomb.]

MARY.

And my lattice-rose,
How its beauty glows!
What's fairer than the bower
Of my old wheel-flower?
The posts of the door
Fragrant and more!

Said Mary, caressing
The vinage entwining,
Still the softest sighing,
—— The softest sighing.

She was thinking, each jasmine-star how the eyes of Joachim
In living and dying had nursed them.
She hath come to the door, the dear old Nazareth-door of the past;
Alas! for the oldenness, all that is dear cannot last!

Never may Nazareth be the old, simple Nazareth quite,
With its flowers and its bees,
And its patriarch under the trees,
'T was a picture on the earth for the earth too bright!
There 's a vacant chair in the porch and an absence everywhere!
Oh, never was sire or spouse so missed, as dear old Joachim there!
Home is not home when the home-saints are removed!

But Mary saw with that eye in her heart,
That Eye beaming down from above,
But Mary heard with that ear in her heart
A whisper 'my dove!' 'my dove!'

'Daughter of Jesse, flower of the rod,
'I am near!' 'I am near!'
'I am thy Father, and thy Father is God!'
'I am here!' 'I am here!'

ANNA.

But I have a flower more fair to show—
Come where the dearer flowers grow.

And Mary went down serene
To the gardens of green.
Over the threshold they crossed,
Over the stone-way ancient and mossed,

Down through the lanes, in through the gate
Where the olden beds of Mary wait—
Mnepsa and sage, lily and rose,
The dearest that Syria grows.

The dear old flowers!
There was the leafage of pink
Where the honey-birds drink,
And grapery bowers
And pomegranate-trees
A-glow in the breeze,
And the fig-tree and lime,
Palestine-bells of blue,
Daffodels of daffodel hue
And the rosemary and thyme.

Wandering amid the bloom of her gardens
Serenely and blissful again,
Breaks the voice of our Anna as a fountain,—
As a fountain breaks in refrain,—
As a fountain disturbs not bathing the feet
Of the flowers liquidly sweet,—
I have a bed to show thee, my child, more dear!
So precious a bed never bloomed in preciousness here!
A bower—a flower—and a bed!
And down 'neath the shadow of trees, sweet Mary she led.

Down to that nook far back we are told,
Where she prayed for the birth of a daughter of old;
Down to that dearest of garden bowers
Hedged in by the rock-way and flowers,—
The old laurel it stood in the morning of rain;
Dear olden tree, we come down to your shadow again.

'Tis a sacred spot
And it shadows a grot—
Grotto or cave in the rear—
And Anna and Mary have entered here.

There was a cave-room,
Green was the floor,
Green and turfed o'er,
Violets grew thick at the door,
Filling the eye with the depth of their bloom,
Scenting the door of Joachim's tomb,
Beautiful
Vestibule
Under the cypress, under the yew,
Under the heavens a holier blue,
Over that spot,
Over that grot,
Under the open Eye of God
Guarding so tender that sacred sod.

Vestibule green and turfed over and half-inclosed;
Within is a cave, and there is he buried
And the door closed up, and the stone rolled against
No man can move, and by the door stands
A little black urn, and within the urn is a flower,—
Mary was coming, but Anna forgot not
The flower as wont that morning from the pot,
By her wheel,—and a rose-tree grew up and hung
Over the urn and over the stone that was rolled
To the door of the tomb within, and the stone
Was covered with myrtle and all of the sides
Of the rock within, and by the entrance
Grew many purple violets of Syria,
And Anna had raised a pillar beside the urn,
And the rose-tree that grew between the stone
At the door and the pillar where Anna prayed now,
Had been transplanted from Joachim's old prayer-place,
And was the same as had suddenly bloomed
That morning as the angel stood beside
And promised the birth of Mary, and the tree
Never lacked a rose for the grave of the saint;
And without the cave, most precious flowers bordered
The paths leading down to the door, precious shrine!
But few days before he died, dear Joachim,
I shall go first, good spouse, he said, bury
Me then in the cave where by you go to pray;

That the dear child may come with you to weep,
When she has come to the old Hill back.
"The dear child"—and thus it was he always called
Her,—the years had gone so fast since she was born,
And she hath ever been so all the child
And dear daughter, we would not hear him call
Her but child, 'dear child!' the word is sweet
In an old man's lips, or in a holy man's—
I love to hear my ghostly Father call
Me child. I used to love to hear my mother call
Me 'child'—most when a woman. She is dead now.
"*May her soul rest in peace*," and Anna for her pray!
We would not have heard Mary's sire call
Her any thing but child, 'dear child!' It was
Most sweet so. It was great to be the child
Of Joachim. A great father is a gift
From God—a godly father is a greater,
And a great and godly father is the greatest.
And every morning Anna came down to pray
Before the tomb of her spouse, and in the afternoon
When it was summer, there was a little seat
Under the tree where she would sit for a time.

When Anna and Mary came out from the cave
It was evening, but the soreness had gone
Out from the heart of Anna—Mary had come.

And the heart of the mourner is consoled
When the comforter cometh: When Mary
Prayeth with us:—Sudden and cutting-off
At a blow hast thou known a great sorrow
And staggered out and found nothing so good
As the fresh, thick crape shutting out the world
Glaring down on you to see how you a Christian
Could stand now, and the first day that had
Any sky for you was when you could fly
And drop at the Feet of God for the dead
And the living, and all the day after lapsed
So peaceful, insomuch you kept saying
Perhaps to yourself, or a friend, a day
Cannot be sorrowful that my dear Lord comes
To me. O blessed, Blessed Sacrament-comfort!
Such in a measure was the presence of Mary,
The odor of her virtues were so imparted.

"*Rose amid Thorns, Immaculate, pray for us.*"

"*Cause of our Hope, Immaculate,*"

"*Pillar of our Faith, Immaculate,*"

"*Source of Divine Love, Immaculate,*"

"*Splendor of all Saints, Immaculate, pray for us.*"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

MIDNIGHT-NOON.

"Sancta Dei Genitrix, ora pro nobis."

"And that dear Dove-Sponse hovered betwixt Heaven and Mary, hovered, waited, hovered—waiting impatient 'that midnight-noon.'

AND Anna kept the feast yet seven days,
But the leading of Mary by Joseph to his house,
According to a ceremony among the Jews,
Was not done: And after these days it came
That Mary was at prayer in her oratory,
Or chamber, and the chamber extended
Into the side of the hill whereon the house
Of Anna was built, wherein a cave was hollowed
Out from the rock; and the cave communicated
Likewise with the garden, and there was a fountain
Of cool water in the cave that emptied
Itself into a channel in the rock and flowed
To the gardens; and near to the mouth, the floor
Of the cave was of earth and trees grew there:

"A little garden grotto where
Gray jutting rock and tree and flow'ret fair
The quaintest alcove form."*

She knelt at the twilight, and she knew not
As she prayed but that it was th' twilight still:
"But whilst all things were in quiet silence,
And the night in the midst of her course,
Thy Almighty word leaped down from Heaven
From Thy royal Throne,"†
"And lo, a light
"That cast no shadow round about her shone,
" ..... and she bent her head....
"Till with the deepening glow there came the rush
"Of wings and fragrance from the Mount of God;
"And seeing not ..... she felt
"That Gabriel was near.‡

"HAIL MARY!"

"Mater Christi, ora pro nobis."

An angel came to Mary with
A lily in his hand,

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* *Rosa Mystica*, p. 18. † Wisdom xviii, 14.

‡ *The Sleep of Mary.*—GEORGE H. MILES' *Ave Maria*, vol. ii. p. 389.

And ever since the cherubim
Have watched for her command.

The grass it was at midnight green
Upon the holy Hill;
The birds saw it, the sheep, the kine,
Yet for the awe were still.

What was it at the midnight so
Illumed the mountain-sod?
Was it the feet of Gabriel, or
A light rained down from God?

Our Maid Immaculate as mute—
As stricken in the light—
Unrisen from her vesper up,
And marvellous as night.

It was at midnight as a flush,
The last, stole up the sky,
A flush came over her pure heart
In sweet thought raised more high.

The Unimagined Face one beam
Upon her spirit shed,
The Unbegotten Babe had toward her looked,
Her heart upon it fed;

And so she knelt;—she could not rise,
She could not quite divine,
But deepened in a sea of prayers and sighs
Since that last flush did shine.

'T was near the midnight as she prayed
In prone humility this grace,
Messiah's mother's nursing-maid to be,
So she might see His face.

"O let me kiss her blessed feet
Who bosoms the Divine!"
'T was midnight, yet as day the night
Did round the Virgin shine.

An angel stood beside, within
His hand a lily-rod,
Three lilies, luminous and white,
A sceptre sent from God.

That minister fresh from th' Court of Heaven*
Looked in her humble face

---

* Mark with what respect, even reverence, the minister plenipotentiary of God, the great Archangel Gabriel, treats her in the interview which he held with her by command of God! He does not address her as an inferior, or even as an equal, but as a superior! He measures not his words by the cold canons of modern *delight-*

And told the greeting sent from God,
"HAIL MARY, FULL OF GRACE!"

And held the sceptre out. She looked
Within one fragrant cup,
The Father's benediction rose
As incense from it up;—

She bowed her virgin head,—sure God
Had made a humble choice:
He loves to lift the humble up—'t is best:
"Behold,"—meek breathed her voice—

The second blossom in—that smile
That hastened down this grace,
Her heart had gone so up for it—
The sweetness of that Face.

---

ened Christianity. He is courteous in his address to the humble Virgin of the house of David; his words breathe the greatest respect and admiration for her exalted position and pre-eminent merits; he compliments and eulogizes her, to her very face, as never was man or woman eulogized and complimented by Almighty God before, neither has been since. It is something to be complimented by God Himself, through His own special envoy; the words of God are *true*, unexaggerated, and they abide for evermore! Most evidently, the Archangel Gabriel was a plain going Catholic of the olden type.—ARCHBISHOP SPAULDING—*Introduction to Ave Maria.* vol. i.

And in the third dear chalice lay
A spousal ring from God:
The angel held the sceptre out; encalmed
She touched the triune-rod.

And scarce had finished in her calm,
"*The Handmaid of the Lord*,"
A ray shot from the Throne, she was
The sweet Vase of the Word.

That right old-fashioned Catholic
Bowed to the very floor,—
He saw the flash, and first of earth
Or Heaven, bent to adore.

The open Heavens above her stood,—
Transfigured on the sod,
The reverent Angel saw
The Mother of his God.

And God incarnate in the flesh
At Mary's feet adored,
Where Mary's children with the angels since
Have adorations poured.

"*Hail Mary, full of grace.*"

With God that Babe, that unclothed Word
The Heavens o'errun, all space
It filled and sought more room
And found it in a virgin's womb!
All glory to His grace!
All adoration to His Clothèd Word!

O "SANCTA DEI GENITRIX!" high praise!
Lost praise! lost in the glory of thy state,
Woman who clothed the unclothed Word! Maiden of God!
At thy en-glory-sandalled feet we pour and wait:
"Dominus tecum!"
And it was done:
Show us Thy Son!
"HOLY MOTHER OF GOD!"
(Nor richer line were ever read)
"HOLY MOTHER OF GOD,"
Sweet graces to our spirits shed!

"AVE MARIA, *gratia plena; Dominus tecum: benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus. Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis, peccatoribus, nunc et in hora mortis nostræ. Amen.*"

"Virgo veneranda, Virgo prædicanda."

"Mater Creatoris, Mater Salvatoris."

"Turris Davidica," "Regina Sanctorum omnium, ora pro nobis."

CHAPTER XL.

INCARNATION-MONTHS.

"Domus aurea, ora pro nobis."

PART I.

THE mysteries of godliness infold :
Its court inclosed, its fountain sealed,
A House within a hidden field,
From base to tower of virgin gold.

Every recess of the field "as a garden
Seen at dawn ;" "a celestial dew
Rests on every thing we see,"
Every fair and fruited tree,
Every shrub, every flower,—walking through,
Or around, Gabriel keeping ward in,

Or keeping ward of, of the mystic
"HOUSE OF GOLD,"
Radiant as the morning more,
As the orient gates unfold—
Gabriel before its door.

And flowers wreathe its precious casement
That never smell of sin,
And its windows are a diamond,
God only, looking in.

'And its chambers?' Only one,
As the moon—as the sun?

'And the fixtures, and the garniture
Of this golden chamber in a golden glow?'
But a couch, as a cloud with rain
Drifted o'er the sun, turned into a rainbow.

'And the couch?'
A bed of mystic spices, curtained mystically, around, above:
'And its curtains?'
And the curtains of this couch are love:
'And the lamp?'
And the lamp that lights this chamber
Is the smile of God unborn:
'And the watch?'
Doth the heart of Mary hold,
Lady of the House of Gold,—
Through the windows as a diamond,
God only, looking in,
The Father ever gazing on the growing features of His Son.
'*Domus aurea, ora pro nobis.*'

From that midnight-noon, and till the third day,
Anna and Joseph, visited souls, likewise,
Walked as in vision;—God's one dear handmaiden,
In clay-humility prone to the earth,

In soul raised to the Throne, some have supposed,
Or imagined in an ecstasy lay, "Living Ark
Of the body of Christ, immaculate!"
But unto us Mary our Ark and House of Gold
Rather appeareth but a world more recollect,
Rapt, bright, O, so heavenly resplendent humility!
The Tower of Ivory suddenly illuminated!
And Anna and Joseph move serenely
Around her beautifully familiar,
Like figures in some Heavenly drama
Around a mystery, intuitively reverent;
A part of the shine on all their garments,
A part of the heavenliness in their faces.

"SAINT ANNA, CLOUD OF LIGHT, PRAY FOR US."

Admirable Anna! venerable Anna!
Unconsciously so near the Messiah—
So near the Messiah-King of her people,
Meek Anna! Grand-Mother to God, and don't
Know it! We love to watch her. Amiable Anna,
Unconsciously giving her child to a mission
For Jesus!—She is wanting Elisabeth to see
Her now—to see all her full-blown virtues, so will
Elisabeth help her love Mary,—she feels
She cannot enough; a want many a heart
Hereafter may know. 'But stay not long,' she said

As she kissed her, and Mary departed;
And the heart of Anna went straight out
After her footsteps and yearned for the returning;
But when Mary came not back for many days,
And it was told unto her that Elisabeth
Will be a mother, it pleased her Mary
Should stay and console her kinswoman now,
For she was stricken in years and might have fear.
Was it not generous? for when she came back,
Put not she her arms around her and cried,
'You go no more from me while I may live!'
And she did not; but was it not generous
To give her up three of those precious months?
Three of those God-months, of those incarnation-months?
Three months so precious that were the sweet lives
Of all saints condensed to three months they would
Not make such; and yet she loved the neighbor
And so yielded.

And Mary departed, we have said:
Joseph would go up to Bethlehem, and Mary
Arose up "with haste," saith the Gospel, to go
Up unto Elisabeth her cousin in Hebron,
And Joseph was joyful to accompany Mary;
But he himself went up straightway from Ain
Unto Bethlehem, where he continued many days,
And these days Mary abode with Elisabeth

And made her heart glad: And on the morrow
When she would return unto Anna, it came
While yet she walked at sunrise in the gardens
Of Zachary, one came to her with tidings
That the child of Elisabeth was born,
And Mary hastened in to rejoice with Elisabeth.
The child being swathed, the nurse placed it first
In the arms of its father, according to custom,
And straightway he that was dumb spake;
Zachary lifted up his voice and blessed the child
That was born unto him and gave him to Mary.
Was n't that beautiful? Zachary, the priest,
Giving his Babe-Prophet into the arms
Of Mary? Is it any wonder John stands
So high in Heaven, son of Zachary and Elisabeth,
Kinsman of Anna, Joachim, Mary, Jesus?
Sanctified herald of the unborn Jesus!
And Mary touched her lips fragrant with God
To the lips of the child and the babe leaped,
And Mary ravished with joy blessed the babe.
She holds him to her virginal heart pregnant
With the Messiah,—Elisabeth overlooking
From her couch, radiant with prophecy.
"What is it to me?"—Elisabeth soft murmuring—
"That the Mother of my Lord should unto me come!"

PART II.

And now consider Mary returning to Nazareth,
"Brooding upon that thing of light
That in her bosom lay"—serene ever
And alway in God. Imagine the days
Allotted unto Anna while the mystery
Of Heaven before her moved in its veil off-shut,
Yet so half-luminous—so shone in Mary's face
And trembled in her voice: And Anna lived
Two lives upon that verge of hidden life:
One of that sensible sweetness near Jesus,
Something as walking—standing—knelt—we may
The Tabernacle near, some day come to know,
And one of a foreboding and a doubt,
And desolateness colder than the grave.
We have upon her looked at midnight in,*
That night the crisis of her grief, and saw
A saint in cloud over whose brow the crown
Hangs ready to fall, and did recollect
All whom Jesus loves and comes near to must
Need suffer some; it is His own dear mark,
All who Jesus heir must weep until the cloud
Unfolds—so unfolded hers—we remember
The scene, Mary coming to her mother's room

* Consecration Night.—*Rosa Mystica*, Book i. chap. v.

At midnight, Anna alone by her hearthstone—
We remember the dialogue of Anna and Mary.

"Her eye
Ran o'er the form that 'twixt her and the lamp
In wane inhaloed by a growing light
In wondrous beauty half-draped stood,"
"And straight the peace that fell was like a cloud
Of love. The spreading halo filled the room.
.....As Martyr Stephen saw
The heavens unroll and open on his view,
So pious Anna upward looked and saw
The Mother of Messias at her feet."

"SAINT ANNA, CLOUD OF BRIGHTNESS, PRAY FOR US."

And Mary has arisen in her sereneness,
So like the moon rounded and fair over the face
Of the world down below so full of sorrow:
Mary has arisen in her bright calm and gone
To her chamber in the rock. And Anna
Went to her couch as in vision or dream,
And the stars have numbered off on the face
Of their clock another hour for Time, and Anna
Never thinks to sleep, blissfullest mother!
Sleep! Sleep! Mary's asleep! 'Blessed child! let
Her sleep,' 'God is with her, let her sleep!'—'God!'

'Sleep with God!' 'Wonderful!' 'O, wonderful!'
'O Israel! whose God has come so nigh!'
Another hour is measured off for God
And Eternity: Sleep, Mother-Anna!

Nay, sleep cannot come unto Anna this night;
Nay, sleep can come to Anna no more;
She has passed the borders of sleep, all, all is too bright!
The need of all sleep, O, blissful! is o'er.
She has caught a glimpse and a look, a very sweet look, into the land
Where sleep clogs never or darkens the views of the luminous strand.

The kiss of Mary is sweet on her cheek—dear cheek!
It will lie there as perfume and dew till she has fled;
For she is fleeing—her soul is going out—going out soon, her spirit so meek,
All unafraid walking out into the paths of the dead
Calmly and beautiful. Saintly Anna, the mystical, sorrowful, brightened night
Is no more night unto her for the growing around her of light.

Such a spiritual shine over, around, on the mantel and wall,
On the wheel standing yet banded there on the floor—

She left it last night for her tears unheeding,—she heeds little now at all—
She has done all her spinning. O, the light through the door!
And her soul as a moonbeam, going out to follow, a-gleam;
Going out as in a dream—a sort of forever dream.

She heard in the night—'What was it she heard?'
It called her to come, and she heard the call—
'Whose was the voice that the night-tides stirred?'
And the glow spread as it called, in the room over all.
He calls me, said Anna, and I must go!—must go!
'I must go!' was her beautiful echo, her beautiful echo.
Nor other voice heard she, but her lips grew still, her face strangely brighter,—
Nor the shadow of ghost flitted by, nor the face of an angel,
But the soul-road her face turned to, and suddenly whiter,
Her spirit walked out as a fearless evangel,
And the room as she passed, stood round her left body all in a glow,
And the lily in the pot wavered and burned as a crucible ready to flow.

And a lane opens up—a ghostly lane-way of light,
And she walks the ghost-way looking bright before,
And the farther on she goes, the brighter around her grows a robe of light,

Till she comes up and knocks—pauses and knocks, at the Limbus door :
Whitest spirit, scarcely had she touched the portal when it opened, when it let her in—
On the threshold who was waiting, who was waiting in the vestibule within ?

And he clasped her, and his robes, whiter than the snow, grew whiter,
And his welcome, what was it not to her ? blessed welcome !
And the vestibule and the halls, all the halls of the dead, grew brighter,
She had brought such haloes in with her to her Limbus home,
And the brightness of their faces flashed up to the skies,
And the angels gathered in the sweetness of their presence rare surprise.

In the vestibule of ghost-land, dearest, waiting Joachim, happiest entered Anna,
All the brightly opened heavens, rapt intent, overhead unrolled,
All the angel-wings and faces canopied above them as a banner,
All the patriarchs on the angel-outskirts hanging as a fold,
Dearest human ancestors to Heaven, something as two shades in a glow supernal,

Shades not substances, yet as light, themselves white in the light eternal!

Leaning thus in the glory, leaning thus on the breast of Joachim,
Happy Anna told it first in Limbus, all the fathers listening, told it first to him.

'God hath come to us, sweet spouse,
To our house and not another,
And that dear child born to us
In our old age is a mother.'

'And her virgin-robe is white,
Favored of the Infinite!
And her Babe, unborn yet, God hath shown
Is the Heir of that Upper Throne.'

Here she lifted up her hands,
Here she lifted up her eyes
To the opened, overbent,
To the hearkening skies,—

'Is the heir of that lifted Throne!
When was ever wonder known?
Who before hath ever heard of the friendship of the Lord?
Who before hath ever reaped of the promise of His word?
Who can ever now receive?
Hearken Limbus and believe!'

Limbus hearkened and believed—
Heard that Mary had conceived.
'In my doubting as I prayed, lo His heavens unrolled to me!
'T is the Virgin!' sighed Isaiah bending near, ''t is the Virgin of my prophecy!'
''T is the woman,' sobbed expectant Eve,
Who shall bear the Fruit to heal the wound for which I grieve,
'T is the woman who shall bring my conqueror defeat!
I was once immaculate, so is she and more! Her victorious heel,
He who ruined all our Eden, soon his bruisèd head shall feel.'

Then the patriarchs, grand and very ghostly, lifted up their brows,
Waiting now in hope, nearer hope, all the fathers, and thanked God
For His love about to flower on the stalk of Jesse's Rod,
For the dear Branch coming forth from Joseph,* from his spreading boughs,
Then they blessed their son and daughter, Joachim and his spouse;

* See Jacob's prophecy where he blesses Joseph in dying.—*Genesis.*

For their offerings, for their prayers, and most for that dear
Hope of their house:
Then they sat down at their feet talking of Messiah,—
Abraham, Adam, Isaac, Jacob, Jesse, David, and Isaiah,
Moses, Aaron, and the three who scorned the furnace,
Daniel,
And Elias, and those others that it fails me now to tell,—
With those holy mothers, Moses' mother, Samuel's, and the
mother of the Maccabees with her seven waiting to
adore,
All that longed and looked for the opening of the Heavenly
door,
Father Abraham's Bosom it was brighter than before,
And in Limbus there was light from that hour evermore.
Blessed Joachim! blessed Anna! and they never ceased to
stand and pray.
And it seemed but as a day to the tracking of that blessed
Bethlehem-way.
Hark the prayers of those saint-parents from the gates of
Limbus in the vesper
Of that self-same Christ-tide, stealing out as a whisper—a
prevailing whisper,
"Let the heavens drop down dew and the earth expectant
bud Messiah!"

Happy Saint Anna! happy Saint Joachim! made worthy of God to be the parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and immediate ancestors of the Messiah—Grand-Parents of Jesus! Anna was buried by the side of her spouse in the cave.—FEAST OF ST. ANNA, JULY 26.

"Let us all rejoice and celebrate this festival in honor of blessed Anna; on whose solemnity the angels rejoice, and praise the Son of God. My heart hath uttered a good word: I speak my words to the King, 'O God, who by Thy grace wast pleased to choose blessed Anna to be the mother of the Virgin Mary; mercifully grant that we, who celebrate her festival, may be helped by her prayers to Thee.' 'Thou hast loved justice, and hated iniquity. Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness. *Alleluia, Alleluia.* Grace is poured abroad in thy lips; therefore hath God blessed thee forever.' 'The daughters of kings honor thee, the queen was on thy right hand in a robe of gold, surrounded with variety."—ROMAN MISSAL.

"FEAST OF SAINT JOACHIM, in the Sunday of the Octave of the Assumption, by decree of Pope Clement XII."

"He hath distributed, he hath given to the poor; his justice remaineth forever and ever; his seed shall be mighty upon earth; the generation of the righteous shall be blessed. O, Joachim! holy husband of Anna, father of the holy Virgin, obtain for us in this life what is necessary for our salvation. Thou hast crowned him, O Lord, with glory and honor, and hast set him over the works of Thy hands. Favorably receive, O most merciful God, the sacrifice offered to Thy majesty, in honor of the holy patriarch Joachim, father of the Virgin Mary; that by the intercession of him, of his spouse, and of their blessed daughter, we may obtain pardon . . . and eternal glory. This is the faithful and prudent servant whom the Lord hath placed over his family to give them their meat in due season."—MISSAL.

"The cultus of Saint Joachim and Saint Anna is very ancient in the East. The Greeks celebrate the memory of Saint Anna three times a year: thus, September 9, 'The just and holy progenitors of God, Joachim and Anna;' December 9. 'The conception of Saint Anna, mother of the Mother of God;' and July 15, 'Death of Saint Anna, mother of the Mother of God.'—*Monastery of Saint Sabbas.* Pope Julius I. is believed to have instituted the feast of Saint Joachim, on the 20th of March, about 1510.—*Calmet.* Justinian I., about 550, erected a beautiful church at Constantinople in honor of Saint Anna, believed by some to be the mother of the Blessed Virgin.—*Procopius.* Justinian II., about 750, erected a church also to Saint Anna, whose body was translated to Constantinople during his reign.—*Cedrenus.* The body of Saint Joachim is said to be preserved at Venice."—BINET.

And we know not, indeed, where we might pause in noting the growth of this efficacious and precious devotion, but we must fain content ourself with but the mention at this present time of one other memorial to the dear parents of our Immaculate Mother, than which is none more tender, ingenious, and poetical, namely, that of Pope Leo III., who had, we find, about the year 800, the life of Saint Joachim and Saint Anna worked on a vestment; a more sacred place than any poor book in which to have written it. What priest would not have said mass in such a vestment? What child of the Church would not have assisted more recollect and devout?

Blessed be God for Saint Joachim and Saint Anna!

"O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you." "By thy immaculate and pure conception, make our bodies pure and our hearts holy. Amen."